

Vocational Rehabilitation Association of Canada

Code of Ethics

For

Vocational Rehabilitation Professionals

Vocational Rehabilitation Association of Canada

Address

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## Purpose of the Vocational Rehabilitation Association *Code of Ethics*

Ethical behaviour is the core of every profession. The Vocational Rehabilitation Association of Canada (VRAC) *Code of Ethics* sets forth the values and principles to guide the moral behaviour of the vocational rehabilitation professional. These core values reflect the uniqueness of the vocational rehabilitation profession.

A code of ethics cannot guarantee ethical behaviour. Ethical behaviour comes from a vocational rehabilitation professional's individual commitment to engage in ethical practice. Ethical action is not just about what the professional thinks or how they feel. Ethical behaviour is who they are. Core values and the principles that follow from them, must be balanced within the context and complexity of the human experience.

This *Code of Ethics* is a living document. Ethical principles provide a framework that remains durable over time, although, philosophical thinking, legislative, technological advances, environmental, cultural, and social changes continue to evolve, and this document should be reviewed periodically in order to remain current.

For the purposes of this document, client refers to an individual with a disability who is in a professional relationship with a vocational rehabilitation professional.

## Preamble

Vocational rehabilitation professionals advocate for work as a fundamental human right of people with disabilities as set out under Canadian legislation. Thus, the primary goal of vocational rehabilitation is to assist individuals with disabilities gain or regain their independence through employment or some form of meaningful activity.

This is achieved by working collaboratively with the individual with a disability to understand existing barriers and employment potential to facilitate their effective use of personal and environmental resources. In carrying out this multifaceted process, vocational rehabilitation professionals assist individuals with a disability in adapting to the environment, supporting environments (i.e., employers) in accommodating the needs of the individual, and working towards the full participation of individuals with disability in all aspects of society with a particular focus on work.

The vocational rehabilitation process is interdisciplinary by nature, and may involve functional, biopsychosocial, behavioural, and/or vocational interventions. Vocational rehabilitation professionals utilize a variety of activities and techniques to assist individuals with disabilities to gain or regain their independence. Competence with these interventions includes knowledge of vocational interventions and strategies, as well clinical and technical skills. Competence includes diligence. Diligence is the vocational rehabilitation professional's attentiveness not only to their client's needs but also self-knowledge of their own strengths and limitations. Professionals who are registered or certified with a college or association adhere to the activities defined in the scope of practice or services as directed by those organizations.

### **Vocational Rehabilitation Values**

The underlying value in vocational rehabilitation is the understanding that work is a fundamental and central component of people's lives with the focus to maximize the individual's ability to function independently in the environment of their choice with the key words being independently and choice.

In addition to the core value that work is central to people's lives, the following values of vocational rehabilitation guide the provision of ethical vocational rehabilitation services:

- Belief in the dignity and worth of all people,
- Facilitation of independence, integration, and inclusion of people with disabilities in employment and the community,
- Commitment to a sense of equal justice based on a model of accommodation to provide and equalize the opportunities to participate in all rights and privileges available to all people,
- A commitment to supporting persons with disabilities in advocacy activities to achieve this status and empower themselves,
- Emphasis on the holistic nature of human function with a commitment to considering individuals within the context of their social systems, and
- Recognition of the importance of focusing on the assets of the person.

These values inform principles. They represent one important way of expressing a general ethical commitment that becomes more precisely defined and action-oriented when expressed as a principle. The fundamental spirit of dignity and worth with which the Code is written is based upon six principles of ethical behavior:

**Autonomy:** To respect the rights of clients to be self-governing within their social and cultural framework

**Beneficence:** To do good to others; to promote the well-being of clients

**Fidelity:** To be faithful; to keep promises and honour the trust placed in vocational rehabilitation professionals

**Justice:** To be fair in the treatment of all clients; to provide appropriate services to all

**Nonmaleficence:** To do no harm to others

**Veracity:** To be honest

## Ethical Decision Making

Vocational rehabilitation is a multidisciplinary profession. As professionals, vocational rehabilitation professionals must exercise judgement in the face of complex and competing interests and claims. In any given situation, ethical decision-making will involve the informed judgement of the individual vocational rehabilitation professional. Their personal values, culture, religious beliefs, practices, and/or other distinctions can affect ethical choices. Thus, vocational rehabilitation professionals need to be aware of any conflicts between personal and professional values and deal with them responsibly.

Instances may arise when the vocational rehabilitation professional's ethical obligations conflict with agency policies, competing other code of ethics, or relevant laws and regulations. When such conflicts occur, knowledge and judgement must be applied. Vocational rehabilitation professionals are familiar with an ethical decision-making model and make a responsible effort to resolve the conflicts in a manner consistent with the values and principles expressed in this *Code of Ethics*. Additionally, the vocational rehabilitation professional seeks appropriate consultation before making decisions and this may involve conference with an ethics committee, a knowledgeable colleague, supervisor, or regulatory body.



## 1. CLIENT-PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP

Vocational rehabilitation professionals respect the dignity, autonomy, self-determination, and rights of all persons with whom they interact in a professional capacity. They work collaboratively with their clients to promote their well-being and support them in developing their goals. Vocational rehabilitation professionals respect the rights of clients to make their own decisions and make reasonable efforts to ensure their clients are able to make informed choices about their vocational rehabilitation. Vocational rehabilitation professionals respect the diversity of their clients and do not discriminate in their provision of services. They endeavour, at all times, to promote each client's welfare, place the client's interest above their own, and avoid imposing values inconsistent with vocational rehabilitation.

### 1.1 Professional Disclosure / Informed Consent

Vocational rehabilitation professionals recognize a person with a disability has the freedom to choose, to enter, continue, and /or terminate the professional relationship with a vocational rehabilitation professional. Prior to entering into a professional relationship with a person with a disability, the vocational rehabilitation professional informs the individual verbally, in writing, and in a manner that accommodates any limitations the person may have, with the following information:

- The vocational rehabilitation professional's credentials, training, and relevant experience
- Purposes, goals, techniques, procedures, modalities, and orientation of the services provided
- Limitations, potential risks, and benefits of the services
- Expectations of client involvement
- Limits of confidentiality, including statutory exceptions, supervisors or other team members who may be involved and/or any affiliated relationships,
- Risks of electronic communications
- Information and case files retrieval, preservation, and disposal
- Electronic communication and social media policy
- Intended use and distribution of reports, test and assessments results
- Process for disputes or complaints
- Fees and billing arrangements cancellation policy
- Duration of services
- Signed consent to release information from other sources

The vocational rehabilitation professional recognizes that any or all of these issues may need to be reiterated or expanded upon throughout the client-professional relationship.

### 1.2 Third Party Relationships

Vocational rehabilitation professionals who provide services at the request of a third party clarify the nature of their contributions and responsibilities to all involved and ensure all parties are aware of the nature, scope and duration of the services to be provided, the goals and expected outcomes, and to whom and how such outcomes will be communicated.

### 1.3 Collaborative Relationships

Vocational rehabilitation professionals work collaboratively with clients to identify vocational outcomes that are consistent with the values of vocational rehabilitation.

### 1.4 Vocational Plans

When contemplating vocational outcomes, vocational rehabilitation professionals consider plans which offer a reasonable promise of success of mutually agreed upon goals.

### 1.5 Client Choice

Vocational rehabilitation professionals recognize the client's right to choose and provide them with options to make informed choices. They provide clients with adequate information, including any potential risk or consequence as a result of their choice, in order for clients to make an informed decision regarding services.

### 1.6 Capacity and Involvement of Significant Others

When working with minors or other persons who are unable to give voluntary, informed consent, vocational rehabilitation professionals protect the client's best interest. They seek assent of the client to services, and include them in decision making, as appropriate. Vocational rehabilitation professionals recognize the need to balance the ethical rights of clients to make choices and their capacity to give consent or assent. They recognize the family, significant others, social, workplace or educational networks as potential resources and attempt to enlist family or significant others' understanding and involvement in the vocational rehabilitation process.

### 1.7 Client Welfare

Vocational rehabilitation professionals do not exploit the trust and dependency manifested in clients or their families, and avoid any economic, physical, psychological, or sexual abuse or impropriety when dealing with clients and their families.

### 1.8 Respecting Diversity

Vocational rehabilitation professionals demonstrate respect, acceptance, and a willingness to understand different beliefs and client identities that affect their professional activities. Vocational rehabilitation professionals develop and adapt interventions and services to incorporate consideration of client's preferences, and do not discriminate on the basis of age, colour, culture, disability, nationality, ethnicity, gender, race, language preference, religion, spirituality, sexual orientation, marital status, and / or socio- economic status. They actively invest in the continued development and refinement of their awareness, sensitivity, and competence with respect to diversity/difference and take corrective action when warranted.

### 1.9 Language

Vocational rehabilitation professionals use language that conveys respect and addresses issues of differences in ways that are open and professional.

### 1.10 Multiple Professional / Personal Relationships

Vocational rehabilitation professionals refrain from entering into a "multiple relationship" if the multiple relationship could;

- 1) reasonably be expected to impair the vocational rehabilitation professional's objectivity, competence, or effectiveness in performing their functions as a vocational rehabilitation professional,
- 2) lead to a risk of exploitation or harm to the person with whom the professional relationship exists, or

3) expose the person or organization with whom the professional relationship exists to harm or exploitation.

When a vocational rehabilitation professional finds that, due to unforeseen factors, a potentially harmful, multiple relationship has arisen, they take reasonable steps to resolve it with due regard for the best interests of the person affected.

### 1.11 Multiple Clients

When a vocational rehabilitation professional provides services to two or more persons, such as husband and wife, or parent and children, the vocational rehabilitation professional will clarify at the outset which person or persons are clients, and the nature of the relationship they will have with each involved person. If it becomes apparent the vocational rehabilitation professional may be called upon to perform potentially conflicting roles, the vocational rehabilitation professional will clarify, adjust, or withdraw from such roles with care.

### 1.12 Group Work

Vocational rehabilitation professionals screen prospective group participants to the fullest extent possible, for those whose needs and goals are compatible with the goals of the group, who will not impede the group process, and whose well-being will not be jeopardized by the group experience. Vocational rehabilitation professionals take reasonable precautions to protect clients from physical and/or psychological trauma while participating in the group. Vocational rehabilitation professionals clearly communicate the limitations of confidentiality to the group participants.

### 1.13 Protection of Client Interest

Vocational rehabilitation professionals support and protect the client in conflicts between the client's interests and the welfare of the community, the client's family, or the organization with which the vocational rehabilitation professional is associated, unless there is immediate danger to other individuals or the client's behaviour is perceived to be not in their best interests, illegal, or harmful to the others.

### 1.14 Respect for Privacy

Vocational rehabilitation professionals respect their client's privacy and only solicit or share information when it is beneficial and/or necessary to the provision of services.

### 1.15 Prohibition of Sexual Relationships with Current Clients

Vocational rehabilitation professionals do not engage in sexual or romantic relationships with current clients.

### 1.16 Prohibition of Sexual Relationships with Vulnerable Clients

The vocational rehabilitation professional does not engage in a sexual or romantic relationship with a former client with a history of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, or if the client has ever been diagnosed with any form of psychosis or personality disorder, developmental disability, marked cognitive impairment, or if the client is likely to remain in need of therapy due to the intensity or chronicity of disability.

### 1.17 Physical or Non-Erotic Contact with Clients

Vocational rehabilitation professionals are aware of and use good judgement, acknowledging that touching or physical contact with a client could be misunderstood.

### 1.18 Virtual Relationships with Clients

Vocational rehabilitation professionals do not enter into virtual social, business, financial or other relationships with clients. This includes relationships via social media, such as "following", "friending", and "linking" via electronic messaging platforms.

### 1.19 Extending Professional Boundaries

Vocational rehabilitation professionals consider the risks and benefits of extending the boundaries of their professional relationships with current or former clients, their partners, or their family members. When vocational rehabilitation professionals choose to extend these boundaries, these interactions are initiated with appropriate consent from clients and are time-limited or context specific (e.g., constrained to an organizational or community setting). Examples of potentially beneficial interactions include, but are not limited to, mutual membership in professional associations, organizations, or community groups, or attending a formal ceremony.

Where unintentional harm occurs as a result of extending professional boundaries to clients, former clients, or other involved parties, the vocational rehabilitation professional shows evidence of their attempt to remedy such harm.

### 1.20 Communication of Information

Vocational rehabilitation professionals communicate in a manner that is developmentally, psychologically, and culturally appropriate. When clients have difficulty understanding the language used by the professional, the vocational rehabilitation professional provides the necessary services to ensure comprehension by the client. This may include interpreters, translators, and/or the use of assistive technology.

### 1.21 Technology Used to Communicate with the Client

Vocational rehabilitation professionals ensure technology and/or its applications do not present a barrier to participation in rehabilitation services. Where a barrier exists, the vocational rehabilitation professional ensures the client is provided with alternatives for communication.

### 1.22 Termination and Transfer of Client Services

When the vocational rehabilitation professional determines they lack the competence to be of professional assistance to their clients, they avoid entering or continuing professional relationships and suggest alternative referral resources to the client. Vocational rehabilitation professionals do not abandon or neglect clients, and they assist in making appropriate arrangements for continuation of services.

## 2 CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY

Vocational rehabilitation professionals demonstrate respect for the trust and confidence placed in them by clients, communities, and other professionals by protecting the privacy of client information and respecting the client's right to control when, whether, and how much of this information is to be shared with other parties. Vocational rehabilitation professionals consider the developmental, cognitive, psychological and/or cultural context of the client and communicate the parameters of confidentiality. In all instances, vocational rehabilitation professionals disclose the least amount of confidential information necessary to achieve the desired purpose.

### 2.1 Client Confidentiality

Vocational rehabilitation professionals respect the confidentiality of client information and take reasonable precautions to protect confidential information obtained through the course of their work. They inform clients verbally and in writing any limits or potential limits of the confidential nature of their relationship including, but not limited to:

- Discussion with team members, supervisors, employers, and/or consultation with other professionals for the purposes of providing effective services.
- Information collected on behalf of government, insurance companies, and/or other agencies to which the vocational rehabilitation professional has a contractual obligation.
- Legal regulations such as reporting risk of neglect of children, response to subpoena or court order, investigation or complaint by legal body, and/or disclosure of contagious and fatal diseases.
- Necessary precautions to protect their clients, their own and/or others' health and safety from the inappropriate actions of others, and the obligation to follow the requirements of the appropriate Occupational Health and Safety legislation.
- Conditions of services contracted and paid for by third parties.

### 2.2 Incidental Client Contact

Vocational rehabilitation professionals discuss with the client to determine the level of communication or contact between the client and the vocational rehabilitation professional when meeting incidentally in other settings, including the virtual setting.

### 2.3 Diversity

Vocational rehabilitation professionals take reasonable steps to increase their knowledge, personal awareness, and skills regarding various cultural meanings of confidentiality and privacy for individual clients.

### 2.3 Safeguarding Records

Vocational rehabilitation professionals take all measures necessary to protect and safeguard the dissemination, maintenance, storage, and disposal of client information and records in ways that protect client confidentiality and adhere to the highest level of relevant government policy and/or regulations.

### 2.4 Physical Environment

Vocational rehabilitation professionals ensure interview rooms, reception areas, and conference areas are secure so as to protect client confidentiality. Informed consent applies when meeting with clients in both public and other settings.

## 2.5 Limitations of Electronic Communication

Vocational rehabilitation professionals who offer services, products, or information via electronic transmission inform clients of the risks to privacy and the limits of confidentiality. They advise clients of their intent to utilize electronic communication as a medium to manage client information.

## 2.4 Written Consent to Release of Information

Vocational rehabilitation professionals obtain the client's written permission to consult or release confidential information to anybody or to the referral source unless a court of law compels disclosure.

## 2.5 Minimal Disclosure

In disclosing information, vocational rehabilitation professionals only provide information relevant to the vocational rehabilitation process.

## 2.6 Cooperating Agencies

Vocational rehabilitation professionals inform recipients of client information about confidentiality standards to be observed.

## 2.7 Confidential Information for Didactic or Other Purposes

Vocational rehabilitation professionals ensure client information used in research, position papers, education, or other public media protects the client's confidentiality.

## 2.8 Recorded Interactions

Vocational rehabilitation professionals obtain written permission from the client, legal guardian, and/or legal representative prior to any video/audio taping, and/or photographing of any interview session or other interaction they may have with the client.

## 2.9 Group Work

Vocational rehabilitation professionals clearly define confidentiality and the parameters for the specific group being entered, explain its importance, and discuss the difficulties related confidentiality. The fact that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed will be clearly communicated to group members.

## 2.10 Family Work

Vocational rehabilitation professionals protect the privacy rights of each family member. Unless otherwise directed by law, information about one family member will not be disclosed to another member without written permission of the client member.

## 2.11 Alternative Communications

When using alternative means of communication, (e.g. an interpretative service), vocational rehabilitation professionals maintain client confidentiality.

## 2.12 Client Access to files

Vocational rehabilitation professionals provide clients with information on how to access their records during the discussion regarding Informed Consent.

### 3. PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY AND RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER PROFESSIONALS

Vocational rehabilitation professionals value competence in all their professional activities. They recognize the limitations of their expertise and they undertake only those tasks for which they are qualified by education, training, or experience. They continually strive to increase their professional knowledge and skills. They recognize the need for ongoing education in order to remain professionally competent; and they utilize the appropriate scientific, professional, technical, and administrative resources needed to ensure competence in their professional activities. They actively participate in professional associations and organizations that foster the development of the profession for the advancement of people with disabilities. Additionally, vocational rehabilitation professionals engage in self-care activities to maintain and promote their own emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual well-being to best meet their professional responsibilities.

Vocational rehabilitation professionals are committed to open, honest, and accurate communication in all their professional relationships and the public. They recognize the quality of interactions with other professionals influence the quality of services provided to people with disabilities.

#### 3.1 Boundaries of Competence

Vocational rehabilitation professionals practice only within the boundaries of their competence, based on their education, training, supervised experience, appropriate professional experience, and professional credentials.

#### 3.2 Potential Conflict of Interest

Vocational rehabilitation professionals declare if there is a potential for conflict of interest and take all necessary action to avoid this.

#### 3.3 Resources

Vocational rehabilitation professionals are aware of resources including income support systems in which the client may be involved or may benefit from. They ensure both the resources used in their work as well as those referred to their clients, are credible and valid.

#### 3.4 Maintain Competence and Monitor Effectiveness/Ethical Consultation

Vocational rehabilitation professionals engage in continuing education and training to maintain competence and skills, to remain current with generally accepted and applicable professional standards, and to explore new and emerging techniques. Vocational rehabilitation professionals develop collegial supports, and/or engage in peer supervision/mentorship, and engage in regular self-reflection to monitor and evaluate their efficacy. They consult with colleagues or related professionals when they have questions regarding their ethical obligations or professional practice.

#### 3.5 Diversity Competence

Vocational rehabilitation professionals develop and maintain sensitivity and awareness as requisite to diversity competence and ethical practice.

### 3.6 Teaching, Training, Clinical Supervision/Mentoring and Administrators

Vocational rehabilitation professionals, who are administrators/supervisors or educators ensure services are provided in a legal and ethical manner. They delegate or assign work only to professionals who are expected to perform competently on the basis of their education, training, or experience, either independently or with the level of supervision being provided and ensure that such persons perform these services competently. They ensure any training or program material/content is appropriate and meets the standards of the profession. Vocational rehabilitation professionals obtain written permission from clients prior to observing rehabilitation sessions, and/or reviewing the electronic records, including reviewing written transcripts, listening to, or viewing recordings of such sessions, including sessions with supervisors, faculty, peers, or others within the training environment.

### 3.7 Educators

Vocational rehabilitation professionals who are educators define and maintain ethical, professional, and social relationship boundaries. They supervise only within the boundaries of their competence, based on their education, training, supervised experience, professional credentials, and appropriate professional experience. They do not endorse students or those they supervise for certification, licensure, employment, or completion of an academic or training program who are not qualified and take reasonable steps to assist students or supervisees who are not qualified for endorsement to become qualified.

### 3.8 Research and Publishing

Vocational rehabilitation professionals are encouraged to engage in or support research and publication activities that benefit service delivery and promote the quality of life for persons with disabilities. Vocational rehabilitation professionals who are involved in research and publication activities adhere to accepted standards of academic rigor.

### 3.9 Technology-Based Research and Publication/Permission to Record or Observe

Vocational rehabilitation professionals are aware of the limits of technology-based research with regards to privacy, confidentiality, subject identities, venues used, accuracy, and/or dissemination of research findings. They will inform subjects of those limitations whenever possible, and make provisions to safeguard the collection, dissemination, and storage of data collected.

### 3.10 Self-Care and Functional Competence/Impairment of Other Professionals

Vocational rehabilitation professionals engage in healthy self-care activities, are alert to signs of physical, mental, or emotional problems, and refrain from offering or rendering professional services when their physical, mental, or emotional conditions are likely to harm clients or others. They seek professional assistance when required and assist colleagues, co-workers, supervisors, and other professionals to recognize their own impairment, provide consultation and assistance when warranted, and intervene, as appropriate, to prevent harm to clients or others.

### 3.11 Interdisciplinary Teamwork and Communication

Vocational rehabilitation professionals who are part of an interdisciplinary team delivering multifaceted services to clients focus on how to best serve the client. They participate in, and contribute to, decisions that affect the well-being of the client by drawing on the values of the vocational rehabilitation profession and those of colleagues from other disciplines. They recognize the values and ethical



responsibilities of other team members. If the team raises ethical concerns, they follow an accepted ethical decision-making model.

### 3.12 Responsibility to the Public and other Professionals

Vocational rehabilitation professionals have an ethical obligation to act responsibly with the public, other professionals, and the media. They do not disparage other colleagues, agencies, employers, or organizations providing rehabilitation services, and they maintain professional courtesy at all times. They do not engage in any act or omission of a dishonest, deceitful, or fraudulent nature in the conduct of their professional activities. When making personal statements in a public context, vocational rehabilitation professionals clarify they are speaking from their personal perspective and not on behalf of the profession.

### 3.13 Employer Policies and Practices

Vocational rehabilitation professionals who develop policies and practices ensure these policies lead to ethical work conditions/culture. Vocational rehabilitation professionals alert their employers to conditions or inappropriate policies/practices that may be potentially disruptive or damaging to their professional responsibilities or that may limit their effectiveness. They do not harass or dismiss an employee or subcontractor who has acted in a responsible and ethical manner to expose employer policies or practices that conflict with this Code of Ethics.

### 3.14 Transfer of Services

Vocational rehabilitation professionals are knowledgeable about referral resources and may suggest appropriate resources when a client must be transferred to another service provider. All appropriate administrative processes related to transfer of services are completed in a timely manner, and open communication is maintained with both the client and other service providers.

### 3.15 Termination of Client Services

Vocational rehabilitation professionals terminate a professional relationship when it becomes reasonably apparent the client no longer needs, is not likely to benefit from, or is being harmed by, continued services. They may terminate services when in jeopardy of harm by the client or another person with whom the client has a relationship, and provide appropriate pre-termination services.

### 3.16 File Documentation

Vocational rehabilitation professionals establish and maintain documentation that accurately reflects the services provided. If case notes need to be altered it is done in a manner that preserves the original note and is accompanied by the date of change, information identifying the person who made the change, and the reason for the change. File documentation will vary depending on the purpose of referral and service provided and includes the Professional Disclosure and signed Informed Consent.

### 3.17 Universal Design

Vocational rehabilitation professionals support the principle of universal design. When meeting clients in an office or public place, vocational rehabilitation professionals ensure the physical space takes into account any accommodation needs of the client. The use of multiple techniques and tools which are accessible and appropriate for individual's varied backgrounds, learning styles, and abilities, aid in the reduction and/or elimination of barriers to full engagement, learning, and self-discovery in the vocational process.

### 3.18 Interdisciplinary Team Communication

Vocational rehabilitation professionals ensure there is fair and mutual understanding of the vocational rehabilitation plans by all parties cooperating in the vocational rehabilitation process.

### 3.19 Establishing Professional and Ethical Obligations

Vocational rehabilitation professionals who are members of teams clarify professional and ethical obligations both of the team as a whole and of individual members. Vocational rehabilitation professionals implement team decisions in vocational rehabilitation plans unless these decisions breach this Code of Ethics. When team decisions raise ethical concerns, vocational rehabilitation professionals attempt to resolve the concerns with the team. If they cannot reach resolution, vocational rehabilitation professionals consider other approaches consistent with the well-being of the client.

## 4. ADVOCACY

Vocational rehabilitation professionals advocate for people with disabilities at individual, group, institutional, and societal levels. Advocacy is the pursuit of social justice to promote social fairness, equitable distribution of resources, reduce barriers, and expand choice for all people, including people with disabilities. They promote diversity and equal opportunities. They actively engage in the removal of institutional and cultural barriers for people with disabilities.

### 4.1 Attitudinal Barriers

Vocational rehabilitation professionals engage in a variety of professional development activities to enhance their own personal and professional awareness and sensitivity of persons with disabilities. They actively strive to eliminate attitudinal barriers, including stereotyping and discrimination. They are aware of the meaning and impact of their own ethnic and cultural background, gender, class, age, sex, sexual orientation, nationality, colour, race, religion, marital status, physical or mental abilities, socioeconomic status, or any other preference or personal characteristic, condition or status on others.

### 4.2 Advocacy with Cooperating Agencies

Vocational rehabilitation professionals are aware of actions taken by cooperating agencies on behalf of the people with disabilities they are working with and with the client's informed consent, advocate to ensure effective service delivery.

### 4.3 Client Self-Advocacy

Vocational rehabilitation professionals provide their clients with appropriate information, skills education and/or training, to facilitate the client's self-advocacy actions whenever possible. They support the client's efforts toward self-advocacy, both on an individual and an organizational level. Vocational rehabilitation professionals assist their clients to understand their rights and responsibilities, speak for themselves, make decisions, and contribute to society.

### 4.4 Accommodations

Vocational rehabilitation professionals facilitate the provision of appropriate accommodations including accessible facilities, services, and technology to address barriers encountered by people with disabilities. They collaborate with their clients and/or others to identify and develop a plan to address barriers to services.

### 4.5 Barriers to Access/Communication

Vocational rehabilitation professionals identify environmental, physical, communicative, and transportation barriers affecting people with disabilities, and communicate information about these to public and private authorities to facilitate the removal of such barriers to access. They are aware of the principles of Universal Design and relevant legislation.

### 4.6 Referral Accessibility

Vocational rehabilitation professionals ensure, prior to referring a client to programs, facilities, or employment settings, that those services are appropriately accessible to the client.

## 5. ASSESSMENT, EVALUATION, INTERPRETATION

Vocational rehabilitation professionals use assessment and evaluation to help identify and develop appropriate individualized vocational rehabilitation plans with the client. In addition to work samples, situational assessments, and real/simulated work settings, assessment/evaluation includes the administration of valid and reliable tests and tools or the process of assessing an individual within the context of his or her living, learning, or working environments. Vocational rehabilitation professionals ensure the appropriate selection and use of valid and reliable assessment techniques and tools are used. When interpreting results and making recommendations, vocational rehabilitation professionals use all available information and not make recommendations on the basis on limited information or assessment tools.

Vocational rehabilitation professionals recognize some tests and assessment tools use norms that may not include persons with disabilities or may not represent certain cultural groups and therefore, they place the results in proper perspective and acknowledge this information in their recommendations.

Vocational assessments/evaluations are also completed in a Forensic setting. In the case of Forensic Evaluation, the person being assessed is made aware that the vocational rehabilitation professional's ethical obligation is to the court and no counselling relationship exists between them. Forensic vocational assessments/evaluations must maintain the same high level of ethical standard even though the counselling relationship does not exist.

### 5.1 Informed Consent/Process of Evaluation/Debriefing Results

In situations when a vocational rehabilitation professional is only meeting a client for an assessment/evaluation, they ensure the same guidelines for Informed Consent as noted in section 1 of this Code of Ethics is followed. If a vocational evaluation/assessment is completed with an existing client, a separate Informed Consent is completed or the original Informed Consent is reviewed with the client. In all cases of assessment/evaluation, the vocational rehabilitation professional explains the nature and purpose of the assessment/evaluation and for each test or tool provided to the client. In a counselling setting, the results are communicated to the client in an appropriate manner so full understanding is accomplished. If a debriefing is not completed, the vocational rehabilitation professional will document why this was not done. In Forensic Evaluations, a debriefing is not normally completed with the client.

### 5.2 Validity and Reliability

Vocational rehabilitation professionals follow all assessment protocols and ensure the assessment/evaluation, and interpretation process is valid and reliable through standardized tests, work samples, and/or situational assessments in either simulated or real work environments.

### 5.3 Competence to Use and Interpret Assessment Instruments

Vocational rehabilitation professionals only utilize tests and assessment instruments for which they have been trained and/or are competent to administer and interpret and meet the publisher's stated qualifications for administering and interpreting specific instruments.

#### 5.4 Assessment / Evaluation Techniques and/or Instrument Selection

Vocational rehabilitation professionals consider the validity, reliability, and appropriateness of selected assessment/evaluation instruments and techniques. When such validity or reliability has not been established, i.e., when the tool is being used as a research/development process, vocational rehabilitation professionals will describe the strengths and limitations of the results and interpretation.

#### 5.5 Culturally Diverse Populations

Vocational rehabilitation professionals use caution when selecting assessment/evaluation tools or tests for culturally diverse populations in order to avoid inappropriate and/or discriminatory results. They place assessment results and their interpretations within proper perspective with consideration to diversity.

#### 5.6 Norm Divergence

Vocational rehabilitation professionals use caution when selecting, administering, scoring, and interpreting all assessments / evaluations when the client population is not represented in the norm group on which an instrument was standardized. Vocational rehabilitation professionals, when using norm referenced tools, will maintain awareness that persons with disabilities may not be included in the norm references and, when this is the case, will note it in the interpretation.

#### 5.7 Conditions of Assessment/Evaluation Administration and Modifications

Vocational rehabilitation professionals administer standardized instruments under the same conditions established in the standardization except when a modification is necessary to accommodate a client with a disability. Any modifications to conditions must be noted in the interpretation. Vocational rehabilitation professionals do not appropriate, reproduce, or modify a published test, or parts thereof, without acknowledgement and permission of the publisher.

#### 5.8 Security

Vocational rehabilitation professionals maintain the integrity and security of test and other assessment techniques consistent with legal and contractual obligations.

#### 5.9 Conditions of Assessment / Evaluation Administration

Vocational rehabilitation professionals administer standardized instruments under the same conditions established in the standardization except when a modification is necessary to accommodate a client with disability. Any modifications to conditions must be noted in the interpretation.

#### 5.10 Recommendations Based on Test Results

While vocational rehabilitation professionals use test results when making recommendations, they also use all available information and do not make recommendations using only limited assessment tools or single test results.

#### 5.11 Obsolete Tests and Outdated Results

Vocational rehabilitation professionals do not use obsolete tests or data/results from assessments/evaluations that are obsolete or invalid consistent with legal and contractual obligations.

## 6. BUSINESS PRACTICES

Vocational rehabilitation professionals recognize that work environments are cultures that influence the quality of services provided. They develop policies and practices that lead to ethical work conditions. They aspire to be open, and honest in their business practices with clients, students, employees, other professionals, and the general public. Vocational rehabilitation professionals uphold professional standards, clarify their professional roles and obligations, accept responsibility for their behaviour, manage conflicts of interest, and be aware of diversity issues that may lead to exploitation or harm to clients. Vocational rehabilitation professional will exercise reasonable judgment and take precautions to ensure their potential biases, boundaries of professional competence, and limitations of expertise do not lead to or condone unjust practices.

### 6.1 Accurate Advertising, Soliciting Business, and Public Statements

Vocational rehabilitation professionals accurately and completely represent themselves to potential clients and the public. They do not make public statements that are false, deceptive, fraudulent, or exploitative concerning their credentials, research, practice, or other work activities, or those of persons or organizations with which they are affiliated.

### 6.2 Testimonials

Vocational rehabilitation professionals who use testimonials do so with the written consent of the client following full disclosure of the purpose and use of such testimonials. They do not solicit testimonials from current or former clients, or any other persons, who may be vulnerable to undue influence.

### 6.3 Education about the Profession

Vocational rehabilitation professionals make all reasonable efforts to provide accurate information and education about the profession of vocational rehabilitation and make reasonable efforts to correct inaccurate statements made by others about themselves or the profession.

### 6.4 Recruiting Clients through Employment

Vocational rehabilitation professionals do not use their place of employment or institutional affiliation to recruit or gain clients for their private practice.

### 6.5 Promotion of Products and Training

Vocational rehabilitation professional who develop products related to their profession, or conduct workshops or training events, will ensure that the advertisements concerning these products or events are accurate and disclose adequate information for consumers to make informed choices. They do not use teaching, training, client, or supervisory relationships to promote their products or training events which would exert undue influence on individuals who may be vulnerable.

### 6.6 Personal Public Statements

When making personal statements in a public context, vocational rehabilitation professionals clarify that they are speaking from their personal perspectives, and they are not speaking on behalf of all vocational rehabilitation professional, the profession, or any other professional association with which they may be affiliated.

### 6.7 Accepting, Declining, Terminating, and / or Withdrawing from Cases

While all vocational rehabilitation professionals have the discretionary right to accept and / or retain any client and proceed within their area(s) of expertise, they decline involvement in any situation where they are asked or instructed to take or support a predetermined position, or where there are ethical concerns about the nature of the requested assignment.

### 6.8 Invalid Representations of Fact

Vocational rehabilitation professionals decline involvement in any situation wherein they are asked to assume invalid representations of fact.

### 6.9 Withdrawing

Vocational rehabilitation professionals who determine they must withdraw from an assignment make every reasonable effort to assist the client and/or referral source in locating an appropriate resource.

### 6.10 Financial Arrangements/Billing/Commissions/Fees

Vocational rehabilitation professionals charge only for the reasonable hours of service, research, consultation, and administrative work. Payments for services are not contingent upon a case outcome or award. They neither give nor receive commissions, rebates, contingency fees, outcome-based payments, or any other form of remuneration when referring clients for professional services.

### 6.11 Bartering

Vocational rehabilitation professionals recognize bartering arrangements, particularly involving services, create the potential for conflicts of interest, exploitation, and inappropriate boundaries in professional relationship with clients and do not accept goods or services from clients as payment for professional services.

### 6.12 Giving and Receiving Gifts

Vocational rehabilitation professionals demonstrate self-awareness in relation to accepting or declining a gift and make these decisions based on the best interest of the client at all times. They understand in some cultures, small gifts are a token of respect and gratitude. When determining whether or not to accept or give a gift, vocational rehabilitation professionals take into account the professional relationship, the monetary value of the gift, the client's motivation for giving the gift (i.e. cultural practices).

### 6.13 Records Maintenance, Dissemination, and Disposal

Vocational rehabilitation professionals maintain confidentiality in creating, protecting, storing, accessing, transferring, and disposing of records under their control, and as defined by the laws of their province, whether these are written, automated, or in any other medium.

### 6.14 Home Offices

Vocational rehabilitation professionals who maintain home offices develop and abide by all legal, ethical, and security requirements to protect their clients. They ensure physical, administrative, and technical safeguards are in place.

#### 6.15 Safety

Vocational rehabilitation professionals develop safety and contingency plans related to working with clients who are at risk of harming themselves or others. Vocational rehabilitation professionals disclose these risks when referring such clients to others.

#### 6.16 Contingency Planning

Vocational rehabilitation professionals prepare and identify a records custodian for the transfer of clients and their files in the event of the vocational rehabilitation professional's inability to continue to practice.

#### 6.17 Advertising

Vocational rehabilitation professionals maintaining sites on the Internet do so based on the advertising, accessibility, and diverse provisions of this Code of Ethics.

#### 6.18 Professional Electronic Presence

In cases where vocational rehabilitation professionals maintain both professional and personal presence in social media use, they will create separate professional and personal pages and profiles to clearly distinguish between the two kinds of electronic presence.



## 7. TECHNOLOGY AND DISTANCE COUNSELLING

Vocational rehabilitation professionals acknowledge the value of face to face meetings with their clients but recognize there are circumstances when geographic location, client preference/ability, and/or government/health restrictions will prevent or limit the ability to meet with clients personally.

Technology creates opportunities but also has challenges with respect to boundaries, safety of communication, and the client /counsellor relationship. The use of technology requires consideration and good judgment. Vocational rehabilitation professionals will recognize both the potential of technology as a useful tool for assisting their clients, but also the challenges related to boundaries, safety, and relationships.

### 7.1 Electronic Communication and Social Media Policies

Vocational rehabilitation professionals have an Electronic Communication Policy (ECP) which outlines the ways in which they communicate electronically with, and on behalf of, clients. This policy will also identify requirements for obtaining written, informed consent regarding the use of ECP from the client. Vocational rehabilitation professionals will also develop a Social Media Policy (SMP) which outlines their approach to social networking and other tools that may be unrelated to the rehabilitation service being provided to the client.

### 7.2 Behaviour and Competence

Vocational rehabilitation professionals hold to the same level of expected behaviour and competence as defined by this Code of Ethics, regardless of the technology used (e.g., cellular phones, email, video, audio, audio-visual), or its application (e.g., assessment, research, datastorage). They are aware of differences or potential difficulties in communication with clients when using the Internet, and/or methods of electronic communication and the potential misunderstandings arising from the lack of visual cues and voice intonations when communicating electronically.

### 7.3 Accessibility

When considering the use of technology- assisted services, vocational rehabilitation professionals first ensure that clients are functionally and linguistically capable of using the application, and that the technology is appropriate and available for their needs.

### 7.4 Client Privacy

Vocational rehabilitation professionals respect the privacy of their clients' presence on social media, unless given consent to view such information or when there is a safety issue.

### 7.5 Electronic Record Maintenance

Vocational rehabilitation professionals ensure they have a policy regarding electronic record maintenance and retention policies, records storage, procedures to use in the event of technology failure, and if the vocational rehabilitation professional is unavailable for a prolonged period. These policies must hold the same rigor as other file storage and client confidentiality.

## 7.6 Transmitting Confidential Information

Vocational rehabilitation professionals take all reasonable precautions to maximize the confidentiality of information transmitted through the use of computers, email, facsimile machines, telephones, voicemail, answering machines, and other technology through all means available.

## 7.7 Limits of Confidentiality, Informed Consent, and Security

Vocational rehabilitation professionals ensure clients understand the limits of confidentiality inherent in any particular electronic transmission including the roles of any colleague, supervisor, employee, or other individual (Information Technology (IT) administrator) as well as the client's own family members with access to electronic transmissions.

## 7.8 Professional Consultation Groups

When participating in electronic professional consultation groups, (e.g., social networks, listserves, blogs, online courses, supervision, inter-disciplinary teams), vocational rehabilitation professionals:

1. establish and/or adhere to the group's norms, promoting behaviour that is consistent with this Code of Ethics; and
2. limit disclosure of confidential Client information to that which is required for effective consultation.

## 7.9 Records Management, Data Storage, and Disposal

Vocational rehabilitation professionals are aware that electronic messages are considered part of the records of clients. Since electronic records are preserved, vocational rehabilitation professionals inform clients of the retention method and period, of who has access to the records, and how the records are destroyed.

## 7.10 Distance Counselling Self-disclosure/Credential Disclosure

Vocational rehabilitation professionals practicing through internet sites provide information about themselves as would be available if the services were to take place face-to-face. They provide information to clients regarding applicable certification boards and/or licensing bodies to facilitate full disclosure/informed consent to the client, to protect the client's rights, and to protect and address any ethical concerns the client may have.

## 7.11 Distance Relationships/Benefits/Limitations

Vocational rehabilitation professionals inform clients of the benefits and limitations of using technology applications in the rehabilitation process. Such technologies include, but are not limited to, computer hardware and/or software, telephones, the Internet, and any other audio and/or video communication, assessment, research, or data storage devices or media.

## 8. RESOLVING ETHICAL ISSUES

Vocational rehabilitation professionals demonstrate respect for the profession's purpose, values, and ethical principles. They understand the profession depends on a high level of professional standards by acting honestly and responsibly, and by promoting the values of the profession. They incorporate these ethical standards into their daily professional work and engage in ongoing professional development. They accept the obligation to encourage and support other professionals to uphold these same standards. Vocational rehabilitation professionals strive to resolve ethical dilemmas with direct and open communication among all parties and seek consultation with other professionals.

### 8.1 Knowledge of Code of Ethics

Vocational rehabilitation professionals understand these professional standards and/or other applicable ethics codes of the professional organizations, certification, and/or regulatory bodies to which they belong.

### 8.2 Ethical Decision-Making Skills

Vocational rehabilitation professionals recognize underlying ethical principles and conflicts among competing interests. They are familiar with ethical-decision making models and apply appropriate ethical decision-making skills. They document their decision making to resolve ethical dilemmas.

### 8.3 Professional Consultation in Relation to Ethical Decision Making

Vocational rehabilitation professionals consult with other professionals who are knowledgeable about ethics when uncertain as to whether particular situations or courses of action may be in violation of their Code of Ethics.

### 8.4 Conflicts Between Ethics and the Law

Vocational rehabilitation professionals obey the law and statutes of the legal jurisdiction in which they practice unless there is a conflict with this Code of Ethics. If ethical responsibilities conflict with laws, regulations, or other governing legal authorities, vocational rehabilitation professionals will make known their requirement to their ethical responsibilities, and take appropriate steps to resolve the conflict. When conflicts cannot be resolved by such means, vocational rehabilitation professionals may adhere to the requirements of the law, regulations, and/or other governing authorities.

### 8.5 Organizational Conflict

If the demands of an organization with which the vocational rehabilitation professional is affiliated conflict with this Code of Ethics, the vocational rehabilitation professional expresses their commitment to these standards and when possible, works for change through appropriate channels.

### 8.6 Addressing Unethical Behaviour in other Vocational rehabilitation professionals

When a vocational rehabilitation professional observes or witnesses another vocational rehabilitation professional acting in an unethical manner they will:

1. first attempt to resolve the issue informally with the other professional;

2. if this does not result in a resolution of the unethical behaviour, or if an apparent violation has the potential for substantial harm to a person or organization, the vocational rehabilitation takes such actions as may be appropriate to the situation including, but not limited to, reporting to the agency's / organization's Ethics Coordinator or designate, or reporting to institutional authorities. This standard does not apply when such intervention would violate the confidentiality of a client, or when a vocational rehabilitation professional reviews the work of another professional during an ethical review.

#### 8.7 Unwarranted or Frivolous Complaints

Vocational rehabilitation professionals do not initiate, participate in, or encourage the filing of ethical complaints that are made with reckless disregard or willful ignorance of facts that would disprove the allegation, or are intended to harm rather than protect clients or the public.

#### 8.8 Cooperation with Ethics Committees

Vocational rehabilitation professionals assist in the process of adhering to this code of ethics including cooperating with requests, proceedings, and requirements of other organizations having jurisdiction over vocational rehabilitation professionals charged with a violation.

#### 8.9 Unfair Discrimination against Complainants and Respondents

Vocational rehabilitation professionals do not deny individuals of services, employment, advancement, admission to programs, tenure, and/or promotions based solely upon their having made or being the subject of an ethics complaint. This standard does not apply when a vocational rehabilitation professional has been found to be in violation of ethical standards.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Vocational Rehabilitation Association of Canada acknowledges the influences of the following organizations for their code of ethics:

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