

Vocational Rehabilitation Best Practices Checklist

This guide provides facilities with recommendations in areas of the overall operations of the dialysis unit, patient care, and patient assessments.

Facility Operations

- Develop a comprehensive plan to promote vocational rehabilitation (See Building Quality of Life: A Practical Guide to Renal Rehabilitation—Employment module <http://www.lifeoptions.org/catalog/pdfs/booklets/qualoflife.pdf>).
- Review your facility's practices to determine if they are work friendly:
 - Do you prioritize schedules for people who work or attend school?
 - Do you and your staff encourage and support home dialysis options?
 - Does your facility offer evening and weekend dialysis treatments?
 - Does your facility allow patients to use laptops/phones during dialysis?
 - Do doctors consult with the social worker before signing disability forms?
- Include rehabilitation themes in patient newsletters and educational materials.
- Keep brochures and other materials on rehabilitation in public areas.
- Distribute information on rehabilitation to all patients.
- Encourage staff to attend rehabilitation seminars.
- Use the data from the Network Annual Facility Survey to set facility vocational goals and assess activities (See 2010 Vocational Summary Report).
- Collaborate with rehabilitation and vocational personnel in the community and educate them on the vocational needs of dialysis patients.
- Educate employers and advocate for patients' jobs as requested/needed.
- Include in the plan of care the patient's goals in regards to activity level, employment status, education, and treatment modality.
- Use the information from the KDQOL-36 to have a conversation with patients about rehabilitation.

Patient Care

Upon admission meet with the patient, it is expected that the below recommendations will be put into practice through discussions with your patient:

- Discuss personal rehabilitation goals, including but not limited to:
 - Employment.
 - Hobbies.
 - School.
 - Increased physical activity.
 - Increased social activity.
 - Benefits of volunteering.
- Encourage working patients to continue to work.

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From Day 1 team members need to believe and share with patients that they can work while on dialysis. If a patient has doubts, encourage them to not make any quick decisions about employment.

- Educate patients about the benefits of employment. Patients need to hear the facts (see Keeping Your Job When You Need Dialysis):
 - Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) pays about 35% of what patients earn at work.
 - People on dialysis who work are more physically able, have less pain, and have better general health and energy.
 - People who work have fewer and shorter hospital stays – and live longer.
 - People who work are more likely to get and keep transplants.
- Educate patients about Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) and Social Security Income (SSI) work incentives:
 - Ticket to Work Program and Employment Networks.
 - Impairment-Related Work Expenses (IRWE).
 - Continued Payment under Vocational Rehabilitation.
 - Trial Work Period (TWP).
 - Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS).
 - Continuation of Medicare.
 - SSI Payments for People Who Work – Section 1619(a).
 - Medicaid While Working – Section 1619(b) for SSI recipients.
 - Medicaid buy-in for SSDI recipients in some states.
 - Earned Income Exclusions.
 - Student Earned Income Exclusions.
 - Special Rules for the Blind (See the Social Security Administration Red Book for explanations <http://www.ssa.gov/redbook/eng/main.htm>).
- Communicate to every patient that the care team believes they can work and will do what they can to support patients' efforts.

Patient Assessment

Each team member should ask the patient the below questions when completing the Comprehensive Assessment:

- How satisfied are you with your current level of activity?
- How has your job or work status changed since the last time we talked?
- If you went back to school, what would you like to study and where?
- What are your personal goals?
- What can we do better to support your goals?
- Have you considered home dialysis or transplant, which may work better with your goals?