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Who Can Do It?

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South Carolina Commission for the Blind

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STATE DOCUMENTS

Who Can Do It?

Background and Problem Statement

Within the next five years, approximately 30% of the permanent staff at South Carolina Commission for the Blind (SCCB) will be eligible for retirement. By 2012, 66% of the employees who are on the Teacher and Employee Retention Incentive (TERI) Program will maximize employment eligibility. The TERI Program allows employees who are eligible for retirement to continue to work up to five additional years and accumulate retirement money in a special account. Who will be qualified to replace them? The agency will need to continue providing quality individualized services to the blind and visually impaired consumer in the state of South Carolina (SC) when these individuals leave in order to maintain the basic mission.

It is the vision of SCCB "to become a national model separate vocational rehabilitation agency for the blind demonstrating quality consumer services, accountability, innovation, effectiveness and efficiency." Becoming a national model starts with human resources – the workforce. Employees will not only need to meet and/or exceed legal hiring requirement to make this vision a reality, they must also be ready to step in when a higher level position becomes available. This can be done by maintaining a succession plan on each position. A succession plan identifies long range needs of an organization and trains current staff for future vacancies. Currently, a succession plan is not in place.

This project was selected because the agency needs improvement in this area on our Accountability Reports and the agency will need to strategically position itself to meet the high expectation set forth in the vision; therefore, some action needs to be taken now. This

research will focus on the position title of Human Services Coordinator I/Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VR Counselor), the educational qualifications needed for someone moving up into this position and the extra training. Those items, in written format, will become the basis of the succession plan.

The state title of Human Services Coordinator I (HSC I) requires an applicant to have a "Bachelor's Degree and professional experience in human services or social services programs" (See attachment A.) The agency's preference is a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) mandates national requirements for VR Counselors and federal funds are made available under Section III of the Rehabilitation Act for use in providing vocational rehabilitation services programs. According to RSA's Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD), VR Counselors must either be hired compliant or become compliant within thirty months of hire. Without meeting compliancy standards, the question asked should be: What can you do? Currently, the agency does not have a plan specifying the services a counselor with a Master's degree in another discipline can provide. A plan also does not exist for the requirements to meet the next higher level position in the organization.

An intern or a bachelor's level counselor would be an example of an entry level counselor. The agency welcomes the opportunity to provide internships to approved students. During the course of a year, 2 or 3 college/university interns may be gaining useful experience at the agency as part of their curriculum of study. Certain responsibilities/duties assigned to an intern should be documented and at a lower level than senior level counselors. Services

provided by an intern or bachelor's level counselor should also be well monitored by the senior level counselor. Until the intern graduates with a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling or other approved specifications, he/she is not compliant with standards.

If employees are hired as VR Counselors without a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling or a Master's in Counseling with graduate courses in Theories and Technique, then they can obtain a Master's Degree in any discipline along with 18 credit hours of coursework as follows: One graduate course with a focus on Theories and Techniques of Counseling; Three graduate courses, each with a primary focus in one of the following areas – Occupational Information, Job Development and Placement, Medical Aspects of Disabilities, Foundations of Rehabilitation, Psychological Aspects of Disabilities, and Personal and Vocational Adjustment; Two graduate courses, each with a primary focus on one of the following area – Assessment, Research Methodology, Vocational and Career Development, Community Resources, Case Management, and Delivery of Rehabilitation Services; or a current Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) certification, regardless of degree.

Data Collection

Webster's New College Dictionary defines succession as "The sequence in which one person after another succeeds to a title, office, throne, or estate." Much of the information received about succession planning was by telephone interview. Telephone interviews were conducted locally with other state agencies where succession planning and/or credentialing procedures were already in place. The telephone interview was selected because of the low cost involved in this data collection method.

Data was collected from the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) out of Washington, D.C. RSA provides the legal guidelines the agency uses for service provision. The agency is required to stay within the parameters of these guidelines because RSA is the national authority for all rehabilitation agencies. A Technical Assistance and Continuing Education (TACE) Center was contacted because it supports the progress of regional rehabilitation agencies. The agency's particular TACE Center provides support to the following southeastern states: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. Key regional members of TACE were contacted. Along with the TACE Regional Director out of Florida, two consultants from Georgia, and three members from SCCB a conference call was conducted to discuss how other states put together succession plans and to provide a template for succession plans at SCCB. The telephone conference was an economical process and a good use of resources.

Information was gained through online resources as well. The website <http://www.budget.sc.gov> provided useful information about succession plans at other state agencies through their Accountability Reports.

Definitions:

Credentialing – the process of evaluating a person’s current licensure, training or experience, competence, and ability to provide particular services or perform particular procedures

CSPD – Comprehensive System of Personnel Development

HSC I – Human Services Coordinator I

Intern – a student pursuing a higher degree, practicing classroom knowledge in a formal work setting

RSA – Rehabilitation Services Administration – Provides leadership, resources and monitors agencies which provide VR and Independent Living Services.

SC – South Carolina

SCCB – South Carolina Commission for the Blind

SMT – Senior Management Team – The agency Commissioner plus the following Division

Directors: Information Technology, Accounting, Human Resources, Business Enterprise Program, Vocational Rehabilitation/Consumer Services, Training and Employment, Older Blind, and Quality Assurance.

SLED – South Carolina Law Enforcement Division

Succession Plan – A written document which defines the requirements to move up to the next level

TACE - Technical Assistance and Continuing Education

TERI- Teacher Employee Retention Incentive

VR – Vocational Rehabilitation

Data Analysis

Once data was received from local, regional and national sources and compared to the current processes, a gap in workforce upward transition was realized. In order to strategically plan for the future and to attain the vision, our agency will need to develop succession plans. The historical culture of the organization has focused on the agency's mission. Now, under the current administration, the agency is beginning to position itself to strategically meet the challenges of the future.

What is everyone else doing? Some of the agencies had more of a credentialing plan woven into their succession plan. Credentialing is the process of evaluating a person's current licensure, training or experience, competence, and ability to provide particular services or perform particular procedures. If an agency receives payment from insurance companies such as Medicaid for billable services, the person providing the service has to have the proper credentials (background and training.) If a person is hired at the lowest level in a job category, they can become credentialed to provide additional services as they gain more education and experience. The larger agencies have developed different internal titles to match the level of

education/experience an employee has obtained. The succession plan at these agencies is based on services an employee is credentialed to provide.

Other agencies have developed leadership development programs. Their program plan allows a qualified employee to attain up to a "Level 3" leadership status. Successful completion of each level gives an employee an agency internal title for promotional purposes. Each level has its own coursework outlined and includes several days of training and projects. This process serves as a means to acquire an internal pool of candidates who are ready for various levels of management promotions.

In addition to a credentialing program, some state agencies identify individuals to become future leaders by selecting/nominating them for an internal Executive Leadership Program. The program lasts about a year and exposes the candidate to a series of classes designed especially for potential management positions in the future.

Regionally, the Georgia Division of Labor has an internal mentoring program for leadership development. Qualified/seasoned staff members take supervisors who are interested in leadership roles "under their wings" to help them fully understand the responsibilities of leadership. At the same time, new staff members receive training to one day hold supervisory positions. Each major position at this agency has a role specific handbook and a General Knowledge On-Boarding handbook exists for all positions. The "seasoned" mentors close the gap between what is written and every day application of leadership techniques.

Looking nationally, Alaska has a leadership development program supported with succession plans. The program is called Emerging Leaders. By utilizing staff mentoring, job

shadowing and internal leadership seminars and trainings they are developing long range succession plans. The Emerging Leaders Program ensures future leaders are exposed to policies, administrative and leadership information whenever possible.

Montana VR has a leadership program designed only for those who are serious about the future leadership/direction of the agency. In fact, the program is called Montana Vocational Rehabilitation Futures (MVR Futures). The Montana agency anticipates the retirement of their entire senior team or top tier leaders within six to nine years. When the current leadership found discrepancies between the vocabulary and instincts currently available versus what was needed to answer questions about state wide policies, politics and system changes, they began to work on a leadership program which not only shows futures leaders how to "talk the talk" but also how to "walk the walk". This is a three year mentoring program which involves research on a project which has statewide significance.

After receiving local, regional and national information, it is clear each agency is focusing on preparation for leadership. Leadership is an important part in future planning for VR agencies, but everyone can't be a leader. Some employees would just like to know what is required to get to the next level. The concepts gained from the above information can be applied in a succession plan, but for the purposes of this research, a list of identified characteristics is needed because the training is secondary. (See Attachment "B") Just as Montana identified the need for new managers to have/use proper vocabulary first and then prepare the training plan; that is the goal for this research.

Implementation

After reviewing information from different sources, the selection of an approach and its implementation is the next step. To implement a succession planning process, a focus group has been assembled to be the "processing" unit of received data. Members of the group were selected based on their position/title and agency responsibility. Diversity in the group was also considered in order to provide various perspectives. Although this paper focuses on the VR Counselor position, the purpose of the group, as explained in Attachment "B", was to "define succession planning needs for various positions within the agency. More specifically, the group would meet to determine attributes needed to move from one position to another within SCCB; document those attributes; and provide continuous feedback/updates to the plan."

The focus group has already discussed different aspects of the VR Counselor job. Now, the group will need to review all the information obtained from local, regional, and national sources. After that, the group will be able to finalize the succession plan for the VR Counselor position. The plan for this position should take a few weeks to prepare. The plan would then need to be approved by members of the Senior Management Team (SMT).

The final succession plan for VR Counselors will need to be written from the perspective of a person who does not have VR Counselor status. The actual question which would need to be answered would be: What background/experience/training is required to be an entry level VR Counselor? To gain employment at SCCB as an entry level VR Counselor, the candidate would need to have successfully completed a background screening done in the HR Department. This background screening includes prior employment reference checks, completed SLED check, completed Department of Social Services Registry check, and other

reports. State requirements plus work toward or completion of previously mentioned CSPD requirements would be another condition of employment. In addition to meeting those standards, focus group members have already identified the need for a VR Counselor to have supervisory skills and be familiar with an annual review process. This was noted because each VR Counselor supervises a VR Assistant. (Refer again to Attachment B)

Challenges or obstacles in the process would include time, resistance and marketability. It would be most beneficial to the agency to complete the project as soon as possible. The process could be included in the next Accountability Report and/or the next RSA review. Some details of the process could also be mentioned in the State Plan. Resistance could come from individuals who have accepted the current situation and may not want to implement new plans. Another concern would be that employees would think that a promotion with additional compensation would be automatic after obtaining the attributes for the next level. In addition, employees could receive the advance training and obtain the needed skill set only to leave with a job offer from another company.

The implementation would be successful with the support from the SMT and other agency components. The Training Coordinator will maintain succession planning documents to include verification of completed courses/training in the training file and update as required. For example, if an employee is hired with a Master's in Social Work, the employee would be assigned a mentor. The Training Coordinator will determine what courses are required to become a VR Counselor and list those courses on the Succession Plan Form created by the focus group. After each course is completed the completion date is recorded. The required training

will be recorded as well. During the time the employee is completing the college courses, about 18 months, he/she will also be exposed to proper application of VR laws/regulations and appropriate in-service training. At the end of the 18 months, the mentor will determine if the employee has the ability to independently provide VR counseling services. The employee will not be able to work independently as a VR Counselor unless all criteria have been met. If someone does not meet the standards within the prescribed time frame, the supervisor will take action to remove the employee from their position.

It is recommended that a succession plan be implemented using the Montana concept. The Montana model seems to identify the specific needs and/or characteristics and prepare the entire person for the next level. Parts of the Montana model have been used in the above example. The courses the employee has to do to complete the leadership project exposes him/her to situations he/she may not necessarily encounter. The Montana model is much like the Certified Public Manager course offered by the South Carolina Office of Human Resources. Looking ahead, for the VR Counselor to move into the next level of supervision such as a Regional Director, CPM or a comparable course would be recommended.

After the succession planning process is implemented, it is recommended that the focus group continue to meet to stay up-to-date with agency needs and future projections. The focus group will play a role in assisting the agency in becoming a national model. Through succession planning, better quality service, increased accountability, innovation, effectiveness and efficiency will be realized. How will we know we have been successful? Some people would answer "When we're on the Oprah Winfrey Show!" For purposes of this research, we will be

successful when other agencies call and ask if we have a succession plan and the steps we took to implement it. It is the hope that in five years, staff members who have completed the steps on their succession plan will provide better service because they will be more accountable for their actions. This will come from a better understanding of their job and how it effects others gained through working with a "seasoned" mentor. Succession Planning can offer new points of view and innovative ideas from those who have transitioned into vacancies left by retirees. Finally, "doing more with less" is what all agencies are operating with in 2011. Effective and efficient operations are the results of implementing strategic succession plans. We will be successful when our retirees transition out of the agency and we have internal candidates ready to fill their positions without interruption of service delivery.

Each agency approaches succession planning in a different manner. Some agencies use credentialing, some agencies use internal titles, and some use extensive mentoring strategies to designate what an employee needs to do to get to the next level. The final result is a workforce which is braced for the future. In the next five years, the workforce at SCCB will see almost one third of its workforce become retirement eligible. Our question at that point should not be "What can you do?" or "Who can do it?" In five years, the question should be "Which SCCB employee has completed the requirements on the Succession Plan?"

class code

Attachment A

GA50

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Human Services Coordinator I

General Nature of Work:

Provides case management coordination services to include assessment, planning, monitoring, advocacy and direct intervention and provides advisory and consultative services relating to the assigned program area.

Guidelines for Class Use/Distinguishing Characteristics:

Examples of Work:

(Note: The examples of work listed in this class specification are not necessarily descriptive of any one position in the class. The omission of specific statements does not preclude management from assigning specific duties not listed herein if such duties are a logical assignment to the position. The intent of the listed examples is to give a general indication of the levels of difficulty and responsibility common to all positions in this class.)

Evaluates medical, vocational and personal information on clients.
 Manages assigned caseload including maintaining case files and responding to correspondence and telephone inquiries.
 Interviews client, family and any service providers serving the client to assess the client's level of functioning, ego strengths and deficits and emotional status.
 Develops a comprehensive picture of the client's service and treatment needs.
 Intercedes and advocates on behalf of clients to ensure appropriate, timely and consistent services.
 Provides counseling to individuals experiencing temporary difficulties in handling family, vocational, social or other life crises.
 Procures and/or requisitions services for clients.
 Serves as a member of the treatment team in the diagnostic evaluation of clients and the identification of treatment objectives.
 Assists in the design, data collection, literature review and writing of research reports.
 Develops and implements in-service training programs for staff.
 Provides technical assistance to new county offices.
 Informs public of services rendered and rights and benefits of potential clients.
 Prepares record summary of client assessments.

Knowledge, Skills and Abilities:

(Note: The knowledge, skills and abilities listed are not necessarily inclusive of the requirements for every position in the class.)

Knowledge of normal and abnormal behavior adjustment techniques.
 Knowledge of casework practices and interviewing techniques.
 Knowledge of legal principles and practices.
 Knowledge of investigative techniques, principles and practices.
 Knowledge of methods, principles and practices of clinical counseling and educational services.
 Knowledge of services available from the community and other public and private programs.
 Knowledge of federal, state and local laws or regulations pertaining to social service programs.
 Ability to organize and maintain a caseload.
 Ability to exercise discretion in interpreting and applying established objectives.
 Ability to effectively plan, coordinate and manage complex treatment interventions.
 Ability to conduct detailed investigations, draw conclusions and recommend required action.
 Ability to supervise the work of subordinates.
 Ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships with officials, other state agencies, the private sector and the general public.

Ability to communicate effectively.

Necessary Special Requirement:

Minimum Requirements:

(Note: Additional requirements may be applicable for individual positions in the employing agency.)

A bachelor's degree and professional experience in human services or social services programs.

Attachment C

From: Wanda Miller

Sent: Monday, November 01, 2010 10:00 AM

To: Jerry Francis; Felisa Benbow; Glenn McCoy; Linda Johnston; Loretta Clayton; Margaret Duncan; Shana Robinson; Jacqueline Keisler

Subject: Succession Planning

Good morning,

Would you be willing to participate in focus group meetings? The purpose of the focus group would be to define succession planning needs for various positions within the agency. More specifically, the group would meet to determine attributes needed to move from one position to another within SCCB; document those attributes; and provide continuous feedback/updates to the plan. The initial face-to-face meeting would take 1 – 1 ½ hours, but that could change based on what we can accomplish by way of email. Please let me know if you are interested.

Wanda