Davis: Welcome folks to the 3rd in a 9-webinar series "Interpreting in VR Settings." One of the key elements of a system is the personnel that work within the system and their roles and responsibilities. This webinar will continue to build on our understanding of VR as a system by considering the personnel with whom the interpreter will most consistently interact, their roles and responsibilities and how various personnel relate to one another in carrying out the goals and mission of the VR system.

Annarino: Thank you, Cheryl. Before we begin, we would like to take a moment to acknowledge our sponsor – the National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers, the NCIEC. Six centers comprise the NCIEC: they include five regional centers and one national center.

This slide shows the location of each of the centers and the states that are served by the respective center.

Cheryl and I work for the Western Region Interpreter Education Center, a collaborative effort of Western Oregon University and El Camino College. We hang out on the west coast. I believe the interpreters are residing in mid America orange and the remaining VR workteam members make the eastern seaboard their home.
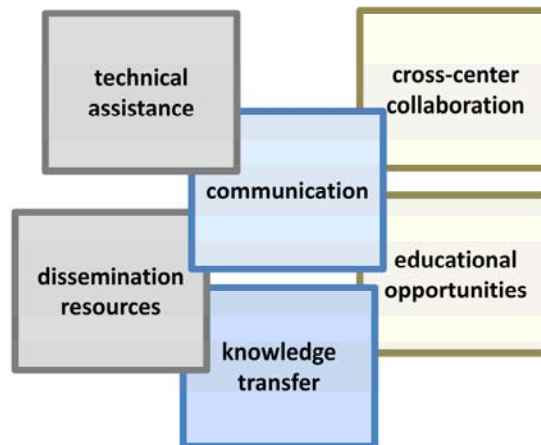
Annarino: The mission of the consortium is to increase the quantity and quality of interpreters nationwide.

To achieve that mission, NCIEC collaborates with various stakeholders to provide technical assistance, education programs, training resources, research, and other related activities. These stakeholders include interpreter educators, practitioners, consumers, personnel from government agencies such as the Administrative Offices of the Courts, Commissions for the Deaf and, of course, VR.

NCIEC does this work in one of two ways: via region-specific activities provided by the Regional Center, or in cross-center collaborations on projects that have a national impact.

One such national project is the *Interpreting in Vocational Rehabilitation Settings*. As part of this project, NCEIC has developed a series of five professional development modules offered online through the MARIE Center. The content for this webinar, as well as the others to follow, is drawn from the five modules.

You can learn more about these modules and related training opportunities by visiting the NCIEC or MARIE website found on the last slide.

Annarino: Thank you all for coming to this webinar. I'm Pauling Annarino, and I'm the Director of the Western Region Interpreter Education Center. I'm known mostly for my interpreting-related work but, unknown to many, I also have a M.S. degree in rehabilitation counseling, and at one time held the CRC (Certified Rehabilitation Counselor) credential. Cheryl and I are members of the NCIEC VR initiative and look forward to this discussion with you.

Davis: I'm Cheryl Davis, and I'm the Director of the Regional Resource Center on Deafness at Western Oregon University. We have a CORE accredited master's program in Rehabilitation Counselor Education, an undergraduate Interpreter Education Program, and a master's program in Interpreting Studies. I run a 4-week certificate program in Rehabilitation Counseling with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Adults. It is an orientation for rehabilitation counselors who are new to working with customers who are deaf or hard of hearing. I have long been interested in access issues related to employment that deaf and hard of hearing individuals face.

Davis: Now we'd like to get an idea of who is in the audience. We have four quick poling questions for you. First, we'd like to know if you've attended the previous webinars in this series.

Results:
Have you attended other webinars in this series?

     A.   6%: Yes, #1 (Systems Thinking for Interpreters)
     B.   15%: Yes, #2 (VR as a System)
     C.   44%: Yes, both #1 and #2
     D.   36%: No, this is my first one.

It looks like this series is new to over one-third of the audience. Welcome!

Davis: Now, tell us about your working relationship to VR. You can choose as many of these as apply. The program only allows for 5 options. If you choose "Other," please take a moment to type in the chat box your responses.

What is your role at work? I am a:

A.	1%:	VRC or other VR Office Personnel
B.	4%:	Community Partner
C.	59%:	Freelance interpreter
D.	7%:	VR staff interpreter
E.	29%:	Other

It looks like the largest number are freelance interpreters, which isn't surprising since there are not a large number of staff interpreters out there. Some of the "Other" responses were interpreter educators, students, and rehabilitation counseling faculty.

Who are You?

POLLING QUESTION #3:

I'm attending because:

    A. I work regularly with VR/community partners

    B. I'm interested in working with VR

    C. I just needed the CEUs

Davis: Next, we'd like to know what is the main reason you are participating in this webinar. Only one response is allowed here.

I'm attending because:
A.	40%:	I work regularly with VR/community partners
B.	37%:	I'm interested in working with VR
C.	23%:	I just needed the CEUs

I'm so glad to see that so many people who are interested in working with VR are attending. I'm also happy to see that folks who work regularly with VR are here. And maybe the some of the folks who are here mainly for CEUs will find out that interpreting in VR settings is something they'd like to explore.

Davis: Finally, we want to get an impression about your expectations and comfort level in working in VR assignments. Again, choose only one option.

Describe your knowledge of VR systems
- A.   56%: I've worked regularly with/for VR and feel pretty comfortable with the system
- B.   23%: I work with VR but sometimes leave the job wondering how what just happened fits into the "greater good"
- C.   21%: I don't think working with VR would be that different from any other interpreting job

Interesting. Pauline and I had bets on which would get the most hits. In talking with interpreters, the only ones who respond A feel comfortable because they have been doing it for years and they are finally starting to feel like they understand the system.

We expected B to be a common response. Since working as a VRC (in most places) requires a masters degree and there are so many different environments VR interfaces with, it makes sense that interpreters would face many complexities on the job and not know how they fit into the picture, especially if they are not consistently working with one client.

If you answered C, I'll be very curious to see if you think differently by the end of the webinar.

Davis: It is very common for interpreters to be called in to work in the various VR settings without having much of an orientation. Our goal is for you to leave with an understanding of:

❑ The context of the VR system as it relates to…

❑ …the role and work of the VR counselor and…

❑ …how the work of the interpreter intersects with this process

The more you understand about the work of the VRC, the more informed questions you can ask. Asking questions serves to purposes: It gets you the information you need, and it educates the people you are working with about how to better include you in the process.

Interpreting in VR Settings Webinar Series

Why Are We Here?

❑ Historically, interpreters learn by doing in VR settings, and without supervision.

❑ Employment acquisition is a high stakes situation.

❑ Some in the population will be vulnerable, and they will most certainly be diverse.

Davis: Participating in career preparation brings with it great responsibility. You may not have the expertise in the many areas where you will find yourself interpreting, but it is your responsibility to make sure that the communication happens. In everything from training to job interviews to job coaching, the consumer's opportunity to make a living is what is at stake.

Some of the customers you meet will be exploring exciting new careers and will be beginning the process of a long-awaited transition. Some are living in poverty. Some have a language other than English as a first language, and some have little formal language. Some face multiple challenges, and some have a prison record. All are seeking access to employment and working towards a career.

Interpreters working in these settings must have a dynamic range of skills that will allow them to interpret for a diverse range of deaf people, including both deaf customers and deaf professionals. If you are an interpreter who enjoys problemsolving and thrives on challenge, you may have just found your niche!

Interpreting in VR Settings Webinar Series

In Other Words...

To play, click link: https://vimeo.com/91668202

Davis: This video from a faculty member in WOU's interpreting programs sets up the importance of the work of VR interpreters. Pamela Cancel has a unique background in that she has worked as a communication specialist employed by VR, has been hired by VR as an agency interpreter, has a masters degree in rehabilitation counseling, has worked as a VR counselor, and is now an interpreter trainer.

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TRANSCRIPT

Hi my name is Pamela Cancel and I'll be talking to you a little bit about VR Interpreting and what I wish I had known when I started out. If I had to choose the number one thing I wish I had know then that I know now, is that the work I was doing was vitally, vitally important. I like to think of the interpreting field and say legal interpreting, medical interpreting and all the other specialties that there are as the "Cinderella" of interpreting. Whereas the two "ugly step sisters" were, for lack of a better way to put it, was VR and educational interpreting. Whereas when I look back I see now that what I was doing was so important, not only for the client but for the community as a whole, and that these were high stakes situations. People were getting jobs and if I think of my own career and how I went about applying for jobs and going to interviews and the nerves and the things that went through my own mind and my own body. To be that interpreter with that individual was something that, if I knew the gravity of that situation I may have approached the work a little bit differently. Not that I approached the work as if I didn't care, I just didn't have a clue as to what my part was and at the time I didn't think that my small part, which is what I thought of it, wasn't really so small. It was a major, major part in the whole machine that is VR and if I had understood back then how I fit, how my little cog was as important to that machine running, I think that I would have had a better time doing the work and the consumer would have gotten a better interpreter.
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Pam makes the point that interpreters are generally not guided through their experiences in these settings. You get thrown in the deep end and deal with it as best you can. While this may work in some settings, it definitely poses problems when working within the VR system.

Interpreting in VR Settings Webinar Series
Focus Group Findings

Top Skill Sets
- ❑ Extensive knowledge of VR, medical, social security, and employment terminology
- ❑ The VR structure and the prescribed nature of the setting

Annarino: Pam's situation is not unique, in fact it is quite common and I suspect a number of you are nodding your head in agreement. NCIEC's own findings echo Pam and many of your own experiences as well.

As many know, NCIEC is dedicated to working within a framework of effective practice in the development of all its training products. This philosophy was applied to the VR initiative. The process included gleaning information via literature reviews, focus groups and surveys from content experts representing all aspects of VR interpreting: customers, interpreters, VR counselors, and other service providers. … and by observing VR interpreters at work. We will sprinkle the myriad of findings throughout the presentation. These reports can be found at the NCIEC website.

So, what is imperative to know about VR personnel and its setting? To this end, we asked this question of all stakeholders:

What two competencies do you perceive as being most important for an interpreter working in VR settings?"

Overwhelmingly, all stakeholders identified two primary knowledge needs. Those being….
        *Extensive knowledge of VR, medical, social security, and employment terminology; and
        *The VR structure and the prescribed nature of the setting.

Reflecting the sentiments of many respondents, are the comment of three working interpreters.
- I always struggle with acronyms… I thought I was good with the acronyms until there was a second agency present and they had a different set of acronyms. It was good that I had the VR terminology down.
- it's always a struggle when new VR terminology is presented.
- Always a challenge with new acronyms.
- It can be difficult when both the customer and counselor already know the acronyms.

Did you notice the operative word…"always"? The terms Ticket to Work and Order of Selection are two phrases that have specific meanings within VR. It is easy to see how a miscommunication might occur if everyone is not clear about the terminology. This can be especially challenging if an interpreter is working with a customer and counselor for the first time, but knows this is not for first meeting between the customer and counselor.

The other top item reported by stakeholders, and which Cheryl has already eluded to, and which we will restate throughout this webinar is "an understanding the structure and prescribed nature of the setting." It can be very frustrating to be in a piece of the process that is defined by structure and clear goals that are not shared or understood by the interpreter. We will talk more about this later in the webinar.

Interpreting in VR Settings Webinar Series

Focus Group Findings

Top Skill Sets

Ability to interpret in an unlimited range of settings, for a diverse range of individuals with a complex and differing communication styles, agendas and expectations, often occurring simultaneously.

Annarino: While the top skill set findings were knowledge-based in nature, our findings also revealed time and time again the impact the complexities of VR interpreting has on the act or practice of interpreting. In support of these complexities, stakeholders were strong and consistent in their description of this skill set:

"An ability to interpret in an **unlimited** range of settings, for a **diverse** range of individuals with a **complex and differing** communication styles, agendas and expectations, often **occurring simultaneously**."

When settings are unlimited, or when you can expect any and ALL communication styles to present themselves in any given situation, AND you must adapt to the situation, often in the moment, VR interpreting is not for the "faint of heart."

For those of us here who are VR interpreters, you know that in some instances you may find yourself interpreting between more than two cultures and communication needs at the same time. In one interpreting situation, you may be interpreting for:

- the deaf customer with their educational background and experience:
- their VR counselor who may have a different educational background and preferred communication style; and
- the hearing individual, who is, well, the hearing individual.

As we will note again and again, VR interpreting is a high stakes interpreting environment and in order to do it well, you must have a good understanding of your ability to adapt and produce successful communication within a multitude of variables. We will look at this too in greater depth shortly.

This webinar addresses VR personnel but in order to understand the role of players, one must understand its purpose and context. We would like to share this context with you…but before we do, we have a couple of questions for you to take a pulse of your knowledge of VR's purpose and goals.

Interpreting in VR Settings Webinar Series

What Do You Think?

POLLING QUESTION #5:
The applicant must pass a financial needs test to be eligible for services.

A. No, because everyone with a disability is entitled to VR services.
B. No. There are other requirements but financial needs is not one of them.
C. Yes, just like with federal student loans, you have to demonstrate need.
D. Yes, because VR will be paying for all of the services.

Annarino: Polling question #5. Answer this to the best of your ability.

The applicant must pass a financial needs test to be eligible for services.
    A.   21%: No, because everyone with a disability is entitled to VR services.
    B.   39%: No. There are other requirements but financial needs is not one of them.
    C.   21%: Yes, just like with federal student loans, you have to demonstrate need.
    D.   19%: Yes, because VR will be paying for all of the services.

The correct answer is B. There is not a requirement of financial need to be eligible. There are, though, related factors that come into play.

For example, if you have insurance that will cover part of an expense, of course that would be used before VR would consider covering the expense. VR is always 'the provider of last resort.' To this end, the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor may be helping the individual leverage other resources to accomplish the customer's goal as part of the VR's prescribed process. Without that knowledge, an interpreter may leave the door open for misinterpretation.

Let's now take option A a bit further in the next question.

Interpreting in VR Settings Webinar Series

What Do You Think?

POLLING QUESTION #6:

If an applicant is profoundly deaf, he or she would automatically qualify for services.

A. Yes, because deafness constitutes a severe disability.
B. Yes, but the only automatic service is the purchase of hearing aids.
C. No, unless there is also an employment issue at hand.
D. No, because Deafness is not a disability.

Annarino: Polling question #6. Answer this to the best of your ability.

If an applicant is profoundly deaf, he or she would automatically qualify for services.

  A. 27%: Yes, because deafness constitutes a severe disability.
  B. 7%: Yes, but the only automatic service is the purchase of hearing aids.
  C. 69%: No, unless there is also an employment issue at hand.
  D. 1%: No, because Deafness is not a disability.

The correct response is C. No, unless there is also an employment issue at hand (assuming the customer wants to work and can benefit from VR services).

Interpreting in VR Settings Webinar Series

Context of the VR System

VR is not an entitlement program; it is based on eligibility.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION
Evaluate and assess potential for employment and develop rehabilitation plan

Davis: Keeping in mind the previous slides, Vocational Rehabilitation is an eligibility program and NOT an entitlement program. The program's purpose is to provide services to individuals with disabilities so that they can find and maintain employment.

In order to qualify, one must:

Have a physical or mental impairment which constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment,

Be able to benefit from vocational rehabilitation services in achieving an employment outcome; and

Require vocational rehabilitation services to prepare for, enter, engage in, or retain gainful employment.

In addition, one must be willing to commit to the process and keep agreements. In other words, you have to show motivation.

This single concept of eligibility to the system includes many layers. The definition should not be reduced to "If you are deaf and need more education to find the job you want, VR can help." There is a great deal of expansion that needs to take place, and the interpreter may need to alert the VRC to this need, especially if the VRC doesn't recognize how loaded the vocabulary and concepts are.

Interpreting in VR Settings Webinar Series

Context of the VR System

Vocational Rehabilitation:

❑ Is a hierarchical system

❑ Is governed by federal and state regulations

❑ Has a prescribed scope and sequence of services

Davis: Eligibility is just one example (and possibly the first one that the customer will face). To say that the structure and culture of VR is complex is an understatement. Most VRCs have advanced degrees in their fields, as do many of the professionals in the community partners network who will also be working with the customer. This alone should let you know that this is a profession that has a well developed ideology and culture. VR is

•a hierarchical system with clear delineations on who can make what decisions and specific protocol on obtaining permissions

•governed by federal and state regulations

•has a prescribed scope of services with specific timeline, order, and responsibility

Interpreting in VR Settings Webinar Series

Context of the VR System

The canvas of VR services spans:

❑ Rehabilitation
❑ Medicine
❑ Finance
❑ Psychological assessment
❑ Entrepreneurship
❑ Human resources
❑ Legal
❑ Professional training in diverse career areas, and
❑ Interpreting services

Davis: The number of services and agencies also make for a challenging and stimulating environment for interpreting work. VR services are a complex canvas spanning:

- •Rehabilitation
- •Medicine
- •Finance
- •Psychological assessment
- •Entrepreneurship
- •Human resources
- •Legal
- •Professional training in a wide variety of career areas
- •Interpreting services

This means that when you work on a VR job, you literally could be working with professionals from any of these fields, thinking about how to communicate its content, complexities, and nuances. The VR counselor has to have a working knowledge of all of these areas.

Interpreting in VR Settings Webinar Series

The Face of VR

To play, click link: https://vimeo.com/91668203

Annarino: As does the interpreter. If it wasn't complicated enough with the need to have a working knowledge of multiple setting that must be carried out within the prescribed context of VR with its agency-specific policies, protocols and practices…the VR personnel who carry out its efforts are as diverse in their backgrounds AND in their communication styles as the setting is prescribed. Let's meet a few VR Counselors.

TRANSCRIPT
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Hi, I'm Douglas Childers and I'm a VR Counselor providing services to deaf and hard of hearing individuals.
My name is Stephen Wited and I'm a VR Counselor here in the in the Ogden District in Ogden Utah. And I hope that this will be helpful today.
My name is Kelly Boehmer, and I'm a counselor supervisor here in rehabilitation counseling.
Hi, this is Heddi.
I'm a supervisor in a VR office.
My name is Lance Wallace. I'm an on the job training and Chose to Work specialist with vocational rehabilitation.
Hello I'm Scot Ferre, VR Counselor for deaf and hard of hearing here in the county for Salt Lake City.
Hi I'm Ted Delstra and I'm here to do an evaluation with Anna, a vocational evaluation and I'm so glad that you are here to interpret.
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Of those eight VR Counselors, three were deaf, two were hard of hearing and three were hearing. And you probably noticed that the last individual was a CDI. And not a VR Counselor. We'll talk more about that later.

The work of these VR Counselors is chronicled in the NCIEC DVD Six Pack entitled *Interpreting In Vocational Rehabilitation Settings*, available free through NCIEC. Should you look at their work in this DVD, you will find hearing counselors attempting to sign, and VR supervisors using interpreters to talk with their counselors, among others. When I reviewed this tape, I was struck by this communication paradigm… or I should say… the lack of a prescribed communication paradigm.

Keep these counselors in mind throughout the webinar.

Interpreting in VR Settings Webinar Series

Primary Staff

The RCD
Rehabilitation Counselor for the Deaf
(Specialist)

The VRC
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor
(Generalist)

Annarino: Deaf VR customers receive services from one of three types of counselors: a Deaf Specialist referred to as an RCD or Rehabilitation Counselor for the Deaf, a generalist referred to as an VRC or Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, or a Blind specialist in some instances for deafblind customers.

An RCD's caseload is limited to deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind customers, including late-deafened individuals with no signing fluency, such as returning military veterans. The generalist serves this clientele AND individuals with a wider range of disabilities.

It is important to note that not all Generalists are hearing. Deaf counselors often fill this role and may rely on interpreters when communicating with their hearing customers. Likewise, many RCDs are hearing. Whether Deaf or hearing, RCDs in almost all cases are expected to have a level of fluency in signing and have strong understanding of the broad-based audiological, linguistic and cultural nuances that make up the lives of their customers.

The current minimum educational degree for a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor is a bachelor's degree in Vocational Rehabilitation; the preferred standard is a master's degree, held in tandem with the field's professional credential, the CRC (Certified Rehabilitation Counselor). However, due to the acute shortage of VR personnel, counselors may be hired with bachelor degrees in such related fields as deaf education or general counseling.

Due the downward shift in federal funding support, educational programs to train counselors are rapidly disappearing. Currently, there are only **five** Rehabilitation Counselor for the Deaf academic programs in the country, and only 2 remaining certificate programs. Fortunately, WOU"s month-long, Rehabilitation Counseling with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Adults (RCDHHA) continues to provide training to VRCs including RCDs, and community partners reagrding communication access options, culture, and issues related to serving Deaf, hard of hearing, and Deafblind customers

With cross-pollination between Generalists, RCDs and Blind specialists, many VR Counselors provide services with gaps in understanding of the nuances of their customers. whether it be a hearing Generalist with gaps in terms of deafness OR the Deaf Generalist with gaps in terms of other disabilities. Yet, a study around the perceptions of VR Counselors in 2009 noted that in terms of professional development, RCDs often turn to Deaf-driven or deaf-specific training for their professional development, while Generalists more often seek professional development opportunities geared for the larger disability family.

Interpreting in VR Settings Webinar Series

Primary Staff

The Hearing Interpreter   The CDI

Annarino: With customer/counselor cross-pollination comes significant work for interpreters, both CDIs and their hearing interpreter counterparts. VR hires two classifications of interpreters: 1) salaried or waged staff interpreters; and 2) independent contractors, or freelance interpreters. They hire hearing bilingual interpreters, trilingual interpreters, CDIs and tactile interpreters.

According to a poll of vocational rehabilitation interpreters and other personnel in 2012, 90% of interpreters hired by VR were contract interpreters, as opposed to staff interpreters. In a second similar survey of VR counselors, that figure was placed at 80%. We found little data that broke out this information between CDIs and hearing interpreters. By default, then, only 20% of VR interpreters are fully a part of VR System from the inside.

Salaries for freelance interpreters range from as low as approximately $20/hours to as high as the highest prevailing freelance rates. It is important to know that in many cases, what VR can pay is, yes, prescribed. And as such, counselors may not be able to hire the most qualified or most appropriate interpreter.

While doing our effective practice due diligence, we found numerous job titles and descriptions for both staff and freelance interpreters. Some reflected an understanding of the role and prevailing codes of professional conduct. Others were written through the lens of the needs of the vocational rehabilitation counselor, not the interpreter.

Qualifications for interpreters were as inconsistent as the interpreter's wage. Even one's title seems to run the gamut. Regardless of written job title or job description, though, the successful interpreter possesses knowledge and understanding of terminology and VR structure. AND they will have the ability to interpret in an **unlimited** range of settings, for a **diverse** range of individuals with a **complex and differing** communication styles, agendas and expectations, often **occurring simultaneously**.

Fortunately, VR is now recognizing the importance of the CDI. Given their extensive knowledge and understanding of deafness, the deaf community, and/or Deaf culture, combined with excellent communication skills, CDI's are often the most equipped to handle all of the variables placed on the VR table.

Speaking of the myriad of variables, let's take a moment to look at the communication variables alone. An interpreter entering an assignment could encounter any one of these communication couplings: a) **a Generalist Hearing Counselor** with no signing capacity, some signing capacity or ASL fluency; b) **a Generalist Deaf/Hard of Hearing counselor** with no signing capacity, some signing capacity, or ASL fluency; c) **an RCD Hearing Counselor** with ASL fluency or some signing capacity; or d) **an RCD Deaf Counselor** with ASL fluency or some signing capacity; and finally e**) the Deaf Customer** with 1) no signing capacity 2) some signing capacity 3) ASL fluency. If my math skills serve me well, given this slate of variables, that makes more than 5o possible communication settings an interpreter may encounter. This complex VR interpreting canvas certainly illuminates the need for the use of CDIs as the go-to or default interpreter. We as hearing interpreters need to support this practice. Let's now take a closer look at the Role of the VR Counselor.

Davis: The role of a VR counselor has been a topic of debate since at least the 1950s. Over time, the roles have been described as counselor, coordinator, clinician and consultant. Many interpreters said to us: "…I think their role is more case management." This is what it often seems like to outsiders, especially knowing the VRC and customer don't meet in a traditional weekly counselor/client session.

The big picture of the work of the VRC is not always clear to the interpreter, especially when the interpreter only sees brief snippets of the process. Pam referred to this earlier as being a "cog" in the VR machine. At the 50,000 foot level, VR exists as an agency that assists people with disabilities to get or keep their jobs. At the core of this vision is the belief that employment is A path (not the only path) to dignity and self sufficiency. Everything that the counselor does is with the goal of developing an individual plan of employment WITH the customer [and according to regulations] that will lead to this person's success in a career or area of the customer's choosing within their skills, interests and abilities. The values include paid work over unpaid work, careers over jobs, and long-term solutions, not short-term "fixes," and customer self advocacy over counselor-centered coordination.

Davis: I have a series of slides here that are word clouds to assist us in visualizing the complexities of each part of the VRC's work. This one reminds us of the many contexts customers might face in addition to disability and job seeking, including family and family concerns, support systems (or lack thereof), incarceration, mental health concerns, overall health, addictions, relationships, and so on.

Within that context, counseling skills are extremely important. Richardson, Rubin, and Bolton surveyed counselors and broke out more specifically how they spend their time with customers:

1. Information seeking: general, specific, exploratory
2. Information giving: administrative, structuring the relationship, educational, and occupational
3. Listening, rapport building, clarification, reflection, restatement, and confrontation

One practice that many agencies are moving towards is called Motivational Interviewing. The stages of this are pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, maintenance, and relapse. I bring this up as an example of the process that might not be fully explained to the interpreter. At pre-contemplation, the individual doesn't realize that there is an issue that they could change that is getting in the way of their progress. During this process, the counselor is trying to determine the individual's motivation to work, and motivation to do whatever is necessary to make that happen. They might ask questions like "how does xxx behavior support your goals?" "If you keep doing this behavior, where do you think you will be in a year?" and "What would you be willing to do to start this change?" I can't do justice to the whole process here, but this is one example of how the interpreting process would benefit from the interpreter understanding this technique and where the counselor is going with the line of questioning.

Davis: The VRC's job often doesn't allow for what we traditionally think of as counseling (although they will be doing this with some customers). Nonetheless, VRCs are applying their counseling skills to almost every aspect of their job, and these skills help them assess the customer's readiness for work. The assessment process is a prime example of this.

The VR customer is likely to encounter many different professionals through both the eligibility determination process and the plan development process. He will likely have evaluations regarding his current and potential functioning in physical, education/vocational, and psychosocial areas. All of these reports go to the VRC, who must develop a diagnostic profile of customer. Again relying heavily on their counseling background, they will use test results to gain understanding of the whole customer, interpret the results of those evaluations to clients, and consult with other experts to determine potential placements.

Pauline and I will be going into more detail in the August 25 webinar "Interpreting for Assessment and Evaluation Processes."

Davis: Certainly a large number of job duties relate to getting people employed. This is an entire system unto itself. There are the job skills (being able to do the job), work adjustment skills (getting to work on time), job seeking skills (developing resumes, filling out applications, evaluating your on-line presence), Job Development (finding jobs that will work for your client base), Employer Development (separate from a particular client, working with an employer to realize the value added in hiring people with disabilities), job placement, job coaching, followup, and post-employment services

Who does this work depends on the agency and on what services are available in a particular area. In some places the VRCs do all of these things, in others any number of these responsibilities might be contracted out, and in some places some of these areas simply don't get the attention they deserve.

Sometimes, even when the services are contracted out, the community partner may not have the expertise in hearing loss, deaf culture and communication to adequately address the deaf customer's needs. This is especially true if the customer is deaf and has additional disabilities. Agencies with the abilities to work with some of these folks are limited. People who are deaf and have other disabilities often only receive services when they happen to live in an area where these services are available.

Davis: As with any practice profession, you have to stay up on the latest developments. For VRCs, that includes diagnosis and prognosis of disabilities, counseling techniques, technology for any number of disabilities, federal and state regulations, and changes in disability law and health services (e.g., the Affordable Care Act). It also includes self reflection, retuning and recharging, and giving back to the profession through mentoring, supervising interns, and participating in various communities of practice.
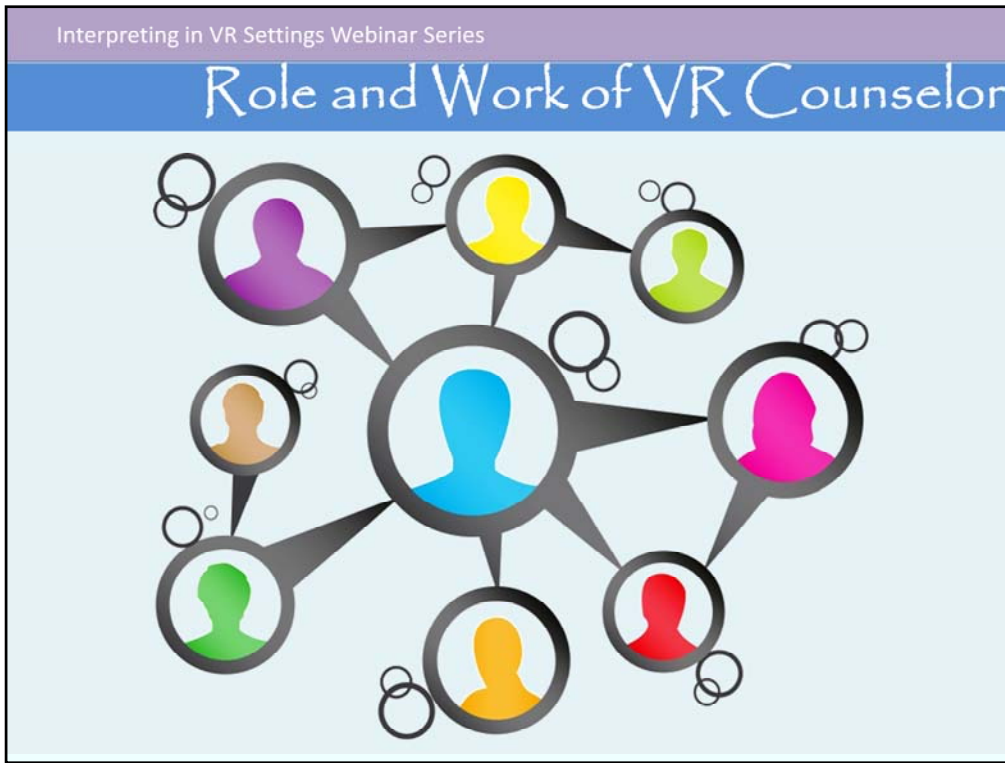
Interpreting in VR Settings Webinar Series

Role and Work of VR Counselor

❏ Manage a Caseload of 100+ AND maintains records and reports of each

❏ Manage budgets and schedules

Davis: If all of that weren't enough, case management and documentation is also a large part of the job. Each one of these activities must be documented in the case management system. These activities will also have a cost attached to them, and all of the typical requisition paperwork that goes along with that. The caseload for a generalist is often well over 100. That means an individual counselor will usually be managing over 100 open cases at any one time, and these customers will be at various points in their rehabilitation process. For RCDs, there is some recognition that because of communication differences and needing to schedule and book interpreters that sessions will take more time. Thus, RCDs often have a reduced caseload (although not that reduced!).

Davis: Clearly, being a VRC requires broad-based knowledge and skills to work successfully with the diversity of needs customers bring to the relationship. The journey involves Intake, Diagnosis, Eligibility determination, Plan development and completion, Service provision, Job Development, Employer Development, Placement and follow-up, and Post employment services. No one person could do all of this, and the VRC depends on getting accurate information and support from a team of people to provide the best services. You can see that the culture of the job might lead the VRC to assume that the interpreter, whether staff or freelance, will be another member of that team.

Annarino: Which brings us to the concept of TEAM. It is the rare person who would argue against the concept of a "team" approach when one is in the business of service provision. And not only is VR primed for working within the concept of the team, many view it as necessary.

However, an individual's expectations and perceptions, and a mutual understanding of each person's role, are the drivers to success TEAM outcomes.

Let's take some time now for Pam to share her reflections of her own role as a VR interpreter.

To play, click link: https://vimeo.com/91669156

Annarino:

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TRANSCRIPT
Hi. Another thing that I wish I had known before going into VR Interpreting is there is no I, big-I interpreter in Team. As interpreters we have fixed in our minds a certain way that we are supposed to be and we tend to take that way of being to every job that we go to. I am the interpreter, that's all I do. I come in, I give the information and as much as possible I am not involved in whatever process is going on. And what I learned pretty quickly, and then later on being a VR counselor myself, was that that role doesn't work in VR interpreting in that you are a part of a team. Now there are certainly times when you are the conduit when that is appropriate, but there are times when you are a part of that team and understanding the roles of everyone in the VR setting, for example the counselor, what the medical aspects have to do with it, the doctors and the evaluations that the client is going to and how that all fits together and how you fit, again that cog, how you fit into this machine called VR. Sometimes things move slowly sometime things move quickly, and depending on the client, one client might get one thing quicker than another client but that's just the nature of the beast. One situation that I have in mind is working with a VR counselor who actually signed, but I was there as more of a support for those concepts that she felt would be better transmitted to the client through me. So I had to be ready to be that support and not get into this mindset of "I'm here to do this type of job and this is how the work looks." And had I known, again, what I know now, my experience in the VR setting would have been a lot different, a lot more different than it was. And if I had to do it over again, I would work better as a part of that VR team and not thinking so much as the big-I interpreter.
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Pam's sentiments echo the NCIEC findings.

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Expectations and Ethics

VR Counselor

Interpreter

Customer

SUPPORT

Annarino: As we know, Pam's point of view is only one of the three individuals who make up the VR communication team. Within this triad are the expectations of the counselor and the customer. And, of course, in the process of doing its discovery, the VR workteam learned that "party expectations" differ.

For example, while the VR counselor may expect that the client will do the "reporting back" on a particular situation, there may be also the expectation that the interpreter report back only if <u>something major</u> occurred. Their mutual understanding of "confidentiality", which both parties fully prescribe to within their own code of ethics, may be unclear if not mutually agreed upon.

Interpreters may feel conflict or experience discomfort if they are unable to reconcile each player's expectations in accordance with their personal code of professional conduct; and the discomfort for the interpreter can go both ways. In the words of one interpreter:

"The most challenging thing is that I cannot offer my opinion when working with a VRC. Interpreters can see a lot more of the puzzle than the counselor."

The deaf customer on the other hand, for the most part, has not given much thought to how "our team" should operate. They are seeking support with the goal of employment. While we as interpreters look to the elements of successful team interaction, deaf individuals are looking to the pragmatics of the interaction … or in other words: Wanted: Deaf individual is seeking support to help find meaningful and gainful employment.

We know that expectations are more clearly defined when one is a staff interpreter. However, as was mentioned earlier, the vast majority of VR interpreters are not staff interpreters. As such, roles expectations may not be clearly defined. Moreover, contract interpreters often see isolated pieces of the puzzle but are not privy to the customer's individual employment plan or its ultimate outcomes.

Let's take a look at one deaf customer's story.

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In Other Words

To play, click link: https://vimeo.com/91668205

Annarino:

TRANSCRIPT
For example, one time I went on a job interview. The boss was awful. He was mean. I felt like crying. I was really stressed and infuriated at him at the same time. This was for a management position. When he called me back for the second interview, he was a different person, I found out the first interview was a test to see how I would handle that stress. So while the VR counselor and the VR interpreter can engage in discussion, you have to ask for the deaf person's feedback first.
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Now if that was your only assignment with this customer, you may have left that assignment with a disheartened feeling. We will learn more about this customer's background later in the webinar, but do know that he got the first important management job and a rewarding career that has spanned twenty plus years.

Which Role and Whose Ethics?

A VRC asks you to report back about how the appointment goes (a job interview, a training session). You respond that you would be happy to interpret any questions he has with the customer.

Annarino: Let's take a minute and look at this scenario.

A VRC asks you to report back about how the appointment goes (a job interview, a training session). You respond that you would be happy to interpret any questions he has with the customer.

This request is a common one. What are your thoughts regarding this statement and this reply? How would you respond to him?
Take a minute and type your (brief) thoughts in the text box.

Counselor expectations mirror educational personnel expectations -- high stakes, coordinated approach.

There may be some question of who owns confidential information.

Share information garnered in the Chat Box.

In Other Words

To play, click link: https://vimeo.com/91668206

Annarino: Let's see what Ed Kelly, our former VR customer, and who is also a former Director of OD-DEAF, Deaf advocate and currently an ASL and interpreting instructor has to say about what an optimum VR team would look like from both the point of an advocate and as a consumer.

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TRANSCRIPT
This is about the VR interpreter as a team member. If a deaf person is going for a job interview, either VR or deaf services would send an interpreter. If the interpreter had interpreted job interviews before, I felt ok. But before they send an interpreter, I feel the deaf person, the interpreter and the VR counselor should have some kind of agreement or arrangement whereby the deaf person would agree that if the interpreter went on the interview, the interpreter could give the deaf person feedback and tell the VRC what happened. I feel you should have some kind of contract or agreement, and be sure not to pressure the deaf person into signing the agreement. If the deaf person says 'fine', then you would go ahead with that arrangement. The interpreter could then go out future interviews. Also, for the VR interpreter to give information to the VRC, I feel the deaf person should be there. That way the deaf person could defend themselves if the job interview was awful or if something goes wrong.
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As you can see, his comments can lead us to believe that the interpreter, as a more engaged team player is a positive role. However, his caveat is strong… Do this only as part of a bigger plan and with an agreement signed off by all prior to the interpreting engagement.

Prior agreement may require prior meeting or preconference in order to determine roles and expectations. Is it worth the extra time and negotiation in order to get everyone's "sign off." Perhaps not if one's going for hearing aid molds. Important job interviews, critical assessments…"high stakes?" ….. I know I would think it worth the time if it was my future or livelihood in the balance.

We all recognize the "which role am I expected to play, and by whose ethics" conundrum. When we asked interpreters about their experiences in working with VR and the challenges that they faced, many expressed discomfort about not reporting back to the VRC, even though they believed keeping their silence was the correct thing to do. They shared such sentiments as:

• "The most challenging thing is that I cannot offer my opinion when working with a VRC. Interpreters can see a lot more of the puzzle than the counselor."
• "Interpreters sometimes notice something that is "off" but instead of acting/speaking out, accept it as just "how it is.""
• "Invisibility of the interpreter is valued, but invisibility can be damaging."

Let's stop and take a moment to reflect on the pros and cons of the conundrum.

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Application

What are the pros and cons of these two paradigms?

❑ Communication only

❑ Contributing (Content) Member of team

Davis and Annarino:

Evaluate this question from the interpreter, counselor, and customer perspective. Take a minute to type your brief comments into the text box.

You would definitely need to set up some guidelines around what is 'reportable' and what is not, and include the customer in that decision making. For example, do you share personal knowledge or only what happens in the interpreting sessions?

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Application

You are interpreting a meeting between the VR counselor and the customer. You know the customer and recognize he is not being honest with the VR counselor about his past work experiences.

Davis and Annarino:

Type your brief comments into the chat box.

1.   What would the VRC expect you to do?
2.   What would the customer expect you to do?
3.   What would you do, and would it depend on if you were a staff or contract interpreter?
4.   How does your decision impact the VRC's ability to do his or her job?

Application

You have worked with a customer in many job preparation trainings and are now on a job interview with her. The interviewer tells her that part of her job is making coffee. She says that she is not making coffee for anyone.

Davis and Annarino:

Type your brief comments into the chat box.

1.   What would the VRC expect you to do?
2.   What would the customer expect you to do?
3.   What would you do, and would it depend on if you were a staff or contract interpreter?
4.   How does your decision impact the VRC's ability to do his or her job?

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Take Away Messages

- ❑ Attend a consumer orientation session (or two)
- ❑ Every party in the team has different expectations
- ❑ Evaluate your own expectations
- ❑ Engage in conversation with the VRC about your assumptions about their expectations on you. Negotiate as necessary.

Melinda Kowalski, Forklift Operator

Annarino: Meet Melinda – a VR success story. Because of quality service, including interpreting, her outcome was successful.

So, as we begin to wrap up this webinar on VR as a system, there are a couple of take away messages that we hope you will keep in mind. (discuss each)

- Attend a consumer orientation session (or two) whenever possible
- Recognize that every party in the team has different expectations
- Always evaluate your own expectations and your skills
- Engage in conversation with the VRC about your assumptions about their expectations on you. Negotiate as necessary.

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Take Away Messages

Computer Programmer

❑Understanding the VR System and its terminology is fundamental to successful communication facilitation

❑Recognize that VR interpreting is community interpreting with educational interpreting expectations

❑VR interpreting is high stakes with far-reaching outcomes

❑VR interpreting is exciting and challenging

Annarino: Meet another VR success story.

Take away messages:
- •Understand the VR System and its terminology is fundamental to successful communication facilitation
- •Recognize that VR interpreting is community interpreting with educational interpreting expectations
- •Embrace the belief that VR interpreting is high stakes with far-reaching outcomes
- •Know that VR interpreting is exciting and challenging

Annarino: We will open things up to questions and answers in just a moment. But before we do that, we would like encourage you to participate in the next webinar, entitled "Interpreting for Deaf Professionals" on April 28th. The presenters for that webinar will be Trudy Schaffer and Dee Clayton.

In addition, we want to make sure you are aware of two other sources of training related to interpreting in VR settings. First, the online professional development series being offered by the NCIEC remains open for registration. You can learn more about the modules on the MARIE website.

Lastly, Pepnet 2, in collaboration with the NCIEC is offering a free six-week asynchronous online series for interpreters thinking about doing more work in the VR setting. Referred to as a QuickClass, the training is available for RID CEUs.

Annarino: We would like to acknowledge the real sponsors of this webinar. We have enjoyed your interaction and appreciate your participation and assistance in making this a worthwhile discussion.

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