

Vocational Peer Support

Trainer's Guide

money recovery
success choose
VPS job satisfaction esteem keep career
future get dreams support

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How to Use the Trainer's Guide

What is the Trainer's Guide? The Vocational Peer Support Training Program (VPS) Trainer's Guide is designed to give you tools, concepts, and lesson plans that you will need to offer a training in Vocational Peer Support.

There likely will be more content in the Trainee Handbook, Training Slides, and Trainer's Guide than you will be able to use. Having more information is better than having less; we offer this information knowing that you will need to decide the needs of your particular training group.

Who should use the Guide? It is assumed that trainers of Vocational Peer Support will have had expertise-level training in both the Vocational Peer Support Training Program and a Train-the-Trainer training in Vocational Peer Support. This Guide will not offer a word-for-word script for each Module, rather, given the expertise the trainer is expected to bring to the training, we offer a Guide with a Plan for teaching VPS skills, conceptual knowledge, and introductions to VPS tools.

This Guide will give you:

- Key instructions for conducting the training
- Picture and page number "anchors" to let you know where you are in the Trainee Handouts and PowerPoint slides
- Key questions to get class discussions going
- Responses to look out for
- Potential responses for key discussions and exercises

How should you use the Guide?

Do:

- Read over the Trainer's Guide before delivering VPS training.
- Create your own personal training plan (see Tips for Trainers) and/or outline, formed from this Trainer's Guide, as you prepare for training.
- Use the Trainer's Guide while teaching.

Don't:

- Be constrained only to the words on these pages. The Lesson Plan is designed to be a guide and can offer key concepts to convey, key questions that have been tested in classrooms, discussion leads, and class exercises to help develop skills and knowledge. However, add your own stories and examples, and train in your own "voice."
- Worry if you notice slides without corresponding workbook pages, and vice versa. This was done to avoid repetition, and to create movement and interest in the training.

Principles and Key Concepts of Vocational Peer Support

Vocational Peer Support (VPS): Vocational Peer Support is an approach to providing employment and educational supports through peer-to-peer mutual support. VPS is designed for trained and/or certified peer specialists who want to support vocational aspirations through mutual peer support.

VPS is not designed to duplicate or take the place of other employment support approaches, such as vocational rehabilitation or supported employment; rather, it is designed to complement other vocational services, utilizing the lived and professional expertise of peer supporters. VPS builds on core peer support skills and knowledge by adding VPS concepts, skills, and tools.

The approach: Vocational Peer Support uses the Choose-Get-Keep approach to employment support, which uses the Psychiatric Rehabilitation approach (Anthony, Cohen, Farkas & Gagne, 2002; Anthony & Farkas, 2011) as a basic framework. Choose-Get-Keep, originally described by Danley & Anthony (1987), upended the traditional approach of *assessment, placement, and follow-along* in employment services and created a person-directed approach in which the person chooses a vocational direction, goes after the desired position, and keeps desired jobs or other vocational roles, with supports as needed and wanted.

Consider-Choose-Get-Keep: Psychiatric Rehabilitation includes a component to support people to determine for themselves their willingness to make an environmental change (Farkas & Nicolellis, 2003). In VPS, we have added the term, "Considering" to Choose-Get-Keep to signify that people who are deciding whether work is feasible or desirable at this time are indeed *considering* employment before they choose, get, or keep it. We have named this process, "Motivational Foundations" in VPS, as it refers to the *motivation* of the person to move forward, but also the *foundations* upon which the remainder of employment decisions are made. Considering whether or not to Choose, Get, or Keep work allows people who are unsure about work to explore factors, such as their need for a change, their beliefs about working, information about options and self, and their level of support for making a change now.

Vocational Recovery: Vocational Recovery in VPS is defined as "*an individualized journey of claiming or reclaiming one's right and capacity to choose, get, and keep vocational paths.*" This definition recognizes that each person's path will be different and tailored to his or her own preferences, values, strengths, and interests. It affirms the basic *right* of people in recovery to both have and go after their vocational dreams. Research over the past few decades clearly has indicated that psychiatric diagnoses are not good predictors of people's *capacity* to work, or even the types of work that people can do (Rogers & Macdonald Wilson, 2011); VPS affirms that people who have been given psychiatric labels can and do live full vocational lives.

Modules of the VPS Curriculum

Module 1: Introduction to Vocational Recovery and Vocational Peer Support. Module 1 reviews the basics of Peer Support and introduces conceptual basics of Vocational Peer Support, Vocational Recovery, and Scaffolding.

1. *Introduction to the VPS Training Program*
2. *Vocational Recovery & Vocational Peer Support*
3. *Scaffolding Vocational Recovery*

Module 2: Partnering to Support Vocational Recovery. The skills of this module are brought in throughout the training program, with skill development in the basics of partnering from a peer support perspective, including ensuring that a person is oriented to any activity, utilizing active, empathic listening techniques, and sharing one's own vocational recovery story.

1. *Orienting*
2. *Listening*
3. *Sharing your vocational recovery story*

Module 3: Motivational Foundations of Vocational Change. This module explores the components that support a person's participation in choosing, getting, and keeping work or school. Participants learn about the building blocks of Need, Information, Support, and Beliefs, and how to develop any foundations that help the person to feel more confident and prepared.

1. *Foundational Building Blocks*
2. *Exploring Motivational Foundations*
3. *Building the Foundations for Vocational Recovery*

Module 4: Supporting Choice in Work and Career. The focus of this module is on choosing meaningful vocational options. By exploring preferences gleaned from past vocational experiences, gathering information about work options, and supporting vocational decisions, trainees learn how to support vocational recovery according to personal choice.

1. *Identifying Preferences*
2. *Gathering Information*
3. *Supporting Decision-making*

Module 5: Scaffolding Getting into Jobs and School. Module 5 explores supporting a person's achievement of an employment or educational goal, once chosen. Key to this module is the exploration of supports that a peer support may provide as the person goes through the process of "getting," with or without other employment services.

1. *Scaffolding Getting Jobs*

2. *Supporting Getting into School*
3. *Thinking Through Disclosure*

Module 6: Keeping Work and School. In this module, peers focus on how to support the retention of work or school, with an emphasis on figuring out which specific skills, resources, and accommodations the person needs and wants for success and satisfaction, and how to support a person to gather them as needed.

1. *Exploring Skills, Supports, and Accommodations*
2. *Developing Skills and Supports for Success and Satisfaction*

Module 7: Coordinating with Vocational and Employment Providers. In this module, participants are introduced to a variety of employment and vocational rehabilitation service models and approaches, and offers skill development in the areas of collaborating with, augmenting, and supporting the use of employment services.

1. *Getting to Know the Array of Vocational Service Options*
2. *Partnering with Service Providers*
3. *Negotiating for Success*

Module 8: Researching Information. This Module seeks to enhance the capacity of peers to support the gathering of information related to vocational recovery. At the core is the refrain, "Know the Basics, Know the Experts."

1. *Clarifying the Question*
2. *Brainstorming Sources*
3. *Gathering Information*
4. *Evaluating for Reliability*

Module 9: Social Security Work Incentives (Optional 1-day Module). This module is designed to offer basic information on the Social Security Work Incentives and integrates the cornerstones of informed decision-making and scaffolding a person's efforts to make informed decisions about a meaningful vocational life.

1. *Getting to Know the Basics*
2. *Using the Experts*
3. *The Role of Peers*

Module 10: Utilization Planning. We close the training with a plan for our own work. A review of training skill areas is followed by planning for participant practice with new skills and tools. Participants are invited to describe supports and scaffolds they will need to put VPS to work.

1. *VPS Skills in Practice*
2. *What's Next? Planning for Supporting Vocational Recovery*

Tips for Trainers

These Tips will give you information you may need as you consider, prepare for, teach, and follow up on VPS training. The Tips are organized loosely under the Consider-Choose-Get-Keep framework, this time for conducting a VPS training. Read and consider the following before starting a training in Vocational Peer Support.

Considering a Class in VPS

Think about the following in deciding whether and how to proceed with offering a Vocational Peer Support training:

- Do you have a group of peer specialists who want and need to be trained to support vocational aspirations?
- Is their role going to remain a peer role, i.e., with a focus on mutuality and shared experience?
- Do the people to be trained have a solid background in the basics of peer support, including peer support skills and ethics?
- Is the primary focus on a peer-provided role, or is there a move toward peers becoming practitioners? VPS maintains a focus on peer practice, and does not try to replicate practitioner roles for which there is other specialized training, such as Employment Specialist or Rehabilitation Counselor.

”Choosing” And Planning for a VPS Class

Use the following to “choose” a class and training environment that makes sense for you and the people to be trained.

The Class: Consider whether you have a ready group of trainees, or whether you are inviting applications. *Consider peer workers who are:*

- **Certified and/or trained peer support specialists.** VPS training does not teach the basic essentials of general peer support, and it is important that all VPS trainees have a solid understanding of peer support concepts, ethics, and skills.
- **Working.** This training is best received by peer specialists who are currently working. Those who are not working to support others will not be able to apply the material to their work, which is key to learning VPS skills.

- **Interested.** The best trainee is someone who wants the training. The best situation is one in which trainees are asking for or are open to the training. Forced training is less likely to be received well.
- **Supported.** People are more likely to be successful in following through with the training and using the skills they learned, if they are supported by their agencies. Consider the support of supervisors in your planning and how “ready” the agency is for peers to support vocational recovery. See the *VPS Implementation Guide* for more on agency readiness for VPS training.

Class Size: VPS is designed to be a highly interactive classroom experience, and we have found that it is wise to have a class of at least 8 people and not more than 20. Larger and smaller classes certainly are possible, but keep in mind that really small classes have less of an opportunity for a variety of ideas and will require more of each individual in terms of participation. In addition, if people leave the training, you are left with an even smaller class. Larger classes may give less opportunity for personal attention to each individual.

Trainers: We have found that it is important to have two trainers whenever possible, especially when the class is larger than 12 people. At least one of the trainers **MUST BE** a peer support specialist, and both must be heavily rooted in a recovery orientation, employment, and/or educational support, and lived and direct support experience. It is preferable for the trainers to have training and/or group leadership experience.

Schedule: Decide how often the class will be held and for how long each time. The Modules vary in terms of length: Some are an hour-long, others will take almost a day. The recommended length of time for each Module will be listed in the Lesson Plan of this Trainer's Guide. The original VPS trainings were held in 2-3 day training sessions, equaling 5 or 6 days total, but ½ day trainings, or even full-week trainings are possible. *A day of training is considered 6 hours of training time, excluding breaks.* Depending on the needs of the group or organization being trained, and your own schedule, plan out the following:

- How many trainings you will schedule.
- Number of hours that each training will last. Consider lunch break, morning and afternoon breaks, if applicable, usually adding up to 1.5 hours.
- Dates and times of trainings.

Space: Do you have a space that will comfortably accommodate your class? Consider that people will need to:

- *Spread out during class*, with a Trainee Handbook, personal items, coffee, etc.
- *Move about the room.* Ensure that people can move about easily in order to participate in group activities, run to the restroom, or take a break as needed.
- *Write.* Make sure participants have tables or desks to lean and write on.