

Vocational Peer Support

Implementation Guide

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

Debbie Nicolellis, Marianne Farkas,
and Lyn Legere



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With gratitude,

Debbie Nicolellis, Marianne Farkas, Lyn Legere

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Introduction to the Implementation Guide

What is the Implementation Guide? The Implementation Guide is a supplement to the:

1. Vocational Peer Support Trainee Handbook and Toolkit and
2. Vocational Peer Support Trainer's Guide

Who is the Implementation Guide for? Administrators, program managers, supervisors, and peer support personnel may find the content of this Implementation Guide useful in their work to support the vocational aspirations of people in recovery.

Why use the Implementation Guide? The Implementation Guide includes information and tools designed to support the use of Vocational Peer Support (VPS) in agencies and organizations. By informing the culture of organizations, supporting, and evaluating the effective use of Vocational Peer Support, including the elements of a relevant job description and other materials, the Implementation Guide is intended to provide advice for the incorporation of Vocational Peer Support into peer services currently delivered in your organization. The Implementation Guide does not supplant VPS training, rather it supplements the efforts of administrators and supervisors as they consider operationalizing ways to support individuals with vocational aspirations through the use of peer support.

When should the Implementation Guide be used?

- **Before VPS training:** The Implementation Guide presents a method of helping organizations assess their readiness for a training program in Vocational Peer Support by providing examples of program characteristics and resources that make it possible for VPS training to be delivered effectively.
- **During VPS training:** The Implementation Guide components, such as the Practice Checklists, may be useful for supervisors to support trainees as they learn and practice new skills within their roles at the organization, and as the program is developing its capacity to deliver VPS supports. In addition, VPS-trained peer staff may use these elements to enhance their own practice using VPS within their agency roles.
- **After VPS training:** Once staff are trained, an organization that implements certain program characteristics, will be more likely to deliver VPS-informed supports effectively. Continuing to develop a culture that both supports vocational recovery and is prepared to support VPS-trained staff is necessary, but not sufficient. The Implementation Guide offers guidance and support to organizations as they continue to use the skills, tools, and information of Vocational Peer Support by providing examples of additional program characteristics critical to implementation of VPS, along with a method of evaluating the extent to which the organization has such characteristics in place.

Concepts in Vocational Peer Support

What is 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 the vocational aspirations of the people they serve.

VPS is not meant to duplicate or take the place of other employment support approaches, such as vocational rehabilitation or supported employment; rather, it was designed to be a complementary approach that utilizes peer supports as the primary supporter of vocational changes. Vocational Peer Support builds on core peer support skills and knowledge by adding VPS concepts, skills, and tools.

What is 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. Applied to the domain of work, Choose-Get-Keep (Danley & Anthony, 1987) upended the traditional approach of *assessment, placement, and follow-along* and created a person-directed approach in which the person chooses the vocational direction he or she wants to move in, the person gets the desired position, and the person keeps desired jobs or other vocational roles with supports as needed and wanted.

The original Psychiatric Rehabilitation approach included a component to support people to determine for themselves whether or not they were prepared and willing to make the change implied by choosing a goal (Farkas et al, 2000; Farkas & Nicolellis 2003). Based on this original Psychiatric Rehabilitation component, VPS added the concept of “Considering” work to the vocational process of Choose-Get-Keep and called the techniques used to support someone considering work “Motivational Foundations.” 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 themselves, their options, and whether or not they have enough supports for making a change now.

What is 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 affirms the basic *right* of people with psychiatric disabilities 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).

Training in Vocational Peer Support

Introduction. VPS training may assist programs that are considering adding VPS to the repertoire in order to increase participation of service participants in employment and education.

Structure. Vocational Peer Support training is a 5-6 day class through which participants are exposed and have experience with concepts, skills, and tools of VPS. The core training is five days, with an optional sixth day of Social Security Work Incentives overview. Each day is composed of six hours of actual training time, with an additional 1.5 hours of breaks throughout the day.

VPS training involves community-based assignments that allow for in-vivo practice of new skills between training sessions. The assignments allow trainees to explore community employment support resources as well as opportunities to explore VPS concepts, tools, and skills with people served in their own workplaces.

Trainers. VPS trainers have expertise in peer support, psychiatric rehabilitation, recovery, and employment support. Lived experience of recovery and peer support is an important characteristic of those who offer the training. It is expected that at least one half of the training team is made up of people with lived experience of recovery and peer support.

VPS Trainees. VPS training works best for Peer Support Specialists, i.e. people with lived experience of recovery from the impact of mental illnesses and/or the public mental health system/addiction services:

- Who have full training and/or certification in the information, skills, and ethics of providing peer support
- Who are currently providing peer support

It should be noted, however, that experience shows that VPS training is best utilized in organizations that also train supervisors and other supporters of peer staff in VPS.

Training Style. VPS trainers engage trainees in learning in a variety of ways, by engaging active participation of the class in dynamic class discussions, showing examples, demonstrating skill performance, and leading active exercises to teach people how to perform key VPS skills. Trainers work to attend to a variety of learning styles throughout the training to accommodate auditory, visual, kinetic, and other learners.

Skills and Tools of the VPS Training Curriculum

Vocational Peer Support adds competencies for peer support specialists so that they are able to support people who want to Consider, Choose, Get, and Keep jobs, training programs, and careers. Throughout the training, participants learn how to “scaffold” people’s efforts to move forward in their vocational lives through a variety of ways.

The following list describes the major VPS Training Modules (Nicolellis & Legere, 2015):

- **Partnering** offers enhanced orienting, listening, and sharing skills that peer specialists need to work effectively with people who are interested in exploring their vocational lives.
- **Building Motivational Foundations** enhances skills that Certified Peer Specialists need in order to support people who are considering a change in their vocational lives to explore and build the foundations for a meaningful vocational life.
- **Supporting Choice in Work and School** allows peer specialists to learn how to support people to identify their work preferences, research potential job options, and make choices about a best match.
- **Scaffolding Getting into Jobs and School** gives peer specialists new ways to think about supporting people as they go after the jobs of their choice.
- **Keeping Work and School** teaches peer specialists additional competencies needed to support the new or potential worker in identifying strengths and areas that need to be built up to increase the likelihood of success and satisfaction on the job (or in training).
- **Coordinating with Employment Services Providers** gives peer specialists the information, skills, and tools they need to support access to and utilization of vocational services.
- **Supporting Informed Decisions about Benefits** provides basic information peer specialists may need about Social Security benefits and work to enhance the CPS’s ability to support people to utilize benefit specialists and programs in their communities.

For Administrators

Introduction: Do we have what we need?

Do we have the staff we need to deliver Vocational Peer Support?

An administrator interested in introducing Vocational Peer Support into an agency can do so best by having or hiring the right staff to deliver VPS. The best candidates for VPS are people who are trained already and/or certified in peer support and hold a set of values about: the importance of work as a pathway to recovery; the value of work as an individual's personal vision for a meaningful life; the critical quality of partnership in the recovery journey; the importance of supporting people's right to make choices about their own life; and the fundamental value of holding hope for people being served, even if they themselves have lost their hope (Farkas, Gagne, Anthony, Chamberlin, 2005; Farkas 2007).

Do we have the job function(s) appropriate for a person who has been trained in VPS?

Before entertaining the thought of hiring individuals with VPS skills and/or providing training for existing staff in VPS, it is important for administrators to have a vision of where they might use individuals with such a skill set.

Several roles/job titles are common to organizations that wish to provide employment support to individuals with psychiatric disabilities. These titles can create confusion about the types of job roles or functions an individual with VPS skills should have. Some agencies hire employment staff in the role of "*Employment Specialist*." Employment Specialists deliver services within a variety of models, including the Individualized Placement and Support (IPS) model of Supported Employment developed by Becker & Drake (2003), or other models, such as the Transitional Employment Program model (Beard, Propst & Malamud, 1982; Fountain House, NY, 1999). *Job Coaches* and *Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors* also can be included in this category. Job Coaches support people to increase skills and supports while working, to enhance the capacity for success and satisfaction at work. Vocational Rehabilitation counselors generally have been trained to work with people with any disability to get back to work.

The main function of the above roles is to deliver employment or rehabilitation services. It is possible that some of the people filling those roles also may have experienced recovery from psychiatric disability and/or addictions themselves. However, the primary focus of the role they fill is the provision of rehabilitation services, not shared peer experiences.

Vocational Peer Support, rather than being a role or function within an agency, is a set of competencies added to those of a person offering peer support. The person who best offers peer support is a *trained/certified peer support specialist*, who is skilled already in delivering peer support. Peer support is a professional role with its own set of principles and ethics, and

involves offering *mutual* support, using a variety of skills with perhaps the most central one being that of sharing of personal recovery stories to inspire hope. VPS adds expertise to this mutually supportive role by including the conceptual knowledge, skills, and tools important to supporting individuals who wish to work or school.

There are various ways in which peers are involved currently in vocational services in the United States. According to Schwenk, Brusilovskiy & Salzer (2009), many peers who provide some level of vocational supports carry titles, such as *Peer Specialists*, *Certified Peer Specialists*, *Peer Mentors*, etc. In other words, many trained and Certified Peer Specialists are supporting vocational recovery now, however; some are doing so without specialized training, skills, or tools. Other peer roles offer a specialization in supporting employment. While not exhaustive, the following are some examples of these current roles:

- *Employment Peer Mentors*, (e.g., Promise Resource Network, Charlotte, NC), who support individuals who use the services of an IPS team,
- *Peer-to-Peer Vocational Support*, (e.g., Department of Mental Health and Addiction Service, CT)
- *Vocational Peer Specialist* (e.g., Chrysalis Center, WI)
- *Peer Employment Support*, (e.g., New York Association of Psychosocial Rehabilitation Services; Community Support Programs of New Jersey)

VPS offers a set of skills, conceptual knowledge, and tools that a trained peer support specialist can utilize to support vocational recovery within a variety of potential organizational roles:

- For example, VPS could be provided by peers on an Assertive Community Treatment Team (ACT). A peer specialist with VPS skills could provide hope for vocational recovery to an individual being served by the Employment Specialist, thereby strengthening the ability of the ACT team to provide effective vocational services.
- Similarly, general outreach and engagement teams might provide VPS, including those who serve individuals experiencing homelessness. A peer specialist, who has had similar experiences and who believes in the possibility of vocational recovery for people using outreach services, may bolster engagement and hope.
- In peer-run organizations, some peer specialists may offer general peer support, while others may wish to specialize in VPS to offer hope for a meaningful vocational life amongst other recovery goals.
- Psychosocial Clubhouses, which focus on helping people to prepare for work amongst other activities, could include peer specialists with additional expertise in VPS to bolster employment-oriented efforts.

- Many behavioral health organizations are beginning to increase their focus on the employment domain as a pathway to recovery. Such organizations could include roles for VPS-trained peer specialists in their employment or educational programs.
- Outpatient clinics and inpatient hospitals are hiring peer specialists in greater numbers. Peer specialists with VPS skills, who work in these environments, can inspire hope for a meaningful, productive life even as the person seeks treatment for immediate needs.

What could a job description look like for a VPS-trained peer?

The role of peer staff using VPS is based on his or her level of training and competency in Vocational Peer Support concepts and skills, rather than on academic degrees. Lived experience of vocational recovery is valued, experience supporting vocational recovery is desirable, and skill in providing VPS supports is essential.

Many organizations seek guidance about what the role of staff utilizing VPS as a major component of their job might look like. A job description for peer support specialists, who will be using VPS in their work, might take many forms.

The following are recommendations for important elements to consider in such a job description but are not intended to be a comprehensive list, nor are they expected to encompass all elements of the peer specialist role.

Education:

- Training (required) and Certification (preferred) as a Certified Peer Support Specialist
- Completion of training in VPS (desirable)

Other Qualifications/Characteristics relevant to VPS:

- Demonstrated capacity to demonstrate empathy with the experience of another person
- Lived experience of recovery from mental health and/or substance abuse challenges
- Lived experience of vocational recovery

Major Duties and Responsibilities:

- Support the vocational recovery of people served in the program
- Model vocational recovery in everyday activities
- Share vocational recovery stories, as relevant to inspire hope for vocational recovery
- Provide Vocational Peer Support, including, but not limited to:

- Discuss vocational recovery and a meaningful vocational life
 - Develop and sustain partnerships that engage the individual using services in a mutually supportive relationship that can inspire hope for vocational recovery
 - Facilitate exploration of motivational factors related to vocational change
 - Help to identify vocational preferences, strengths, and criteria
 - Work with people to research vocational options
 - Support vocational decision-making and choosing of goals in work and school
 - Help to amplify the voice and choice of the person using VPS
 - Ensure that employment, career, and education goals are reflected in the person's service planning
 - Scaffold efforts to get into jobs and training programs of interest to the person
 - Learn with the person about disability benefits, if relevant, as well as legal rights
 - Discuss and learn about potential pros and cons of disclosure of a disability and reasonable accommodations
 - Facilitate exploration and discovery of expectations in the work environment
 - Support the learning of new skills and the use of those skills, as needed in the workplace or school setting
 - Work with the person to strengthen vocational and educational supports
 - Support the use of vocational rehabilitation and/or employment and/or educational support services, as desired by the person served
 - Serve as "translator," as needed, between person and providers/services/systems
 - Utilize Vocational Peer Support tools, discussion prompts, examples, and exercises to facilitate vocational exploration, decision-making, and growth
- Support the growth of Vocational Peer Support in the organization by modeling vocational recovery and educating peers and other professionals about VPS.
 - Work as a member of an interdisciplinary team to serve as a professional with a specific set of competencies, knowledge base, and code of ethics.
 - Serve as an agent of change within the organization, by challenging the organization to hold out hope for the vocational recovery of every person served.
 - Ensure that documentation reflects work on Vocational Peer Support, including considering, choosing, getting, and keeping work and school roles and environments.

Organizational Self-Assessment: Are we ready to offer a Training in Vocational Peer Support?

How do we know that we are ready?

The factors below are indicators that may increase or decrease the likelihood that the training will be successful. Readiness for training in VPS depends on a limited number of factors:

- The right trainees, i.e., the presence of skilled peer support providers with an interest in employment and education
- Agency beliefs, at a minimum, a culture that believes in vocational recovery and acknowledges the importance of work and school to the recovery of agency service participants
- Logistical support for training, i.e., training room, available staff time, resources
- Follow up, i.e., room in trainees' schedules to participate in supervision with trainers, supportive supervisors

How can we assess readiness for VPS Training?

The Assessment on the pages following will help you as an organization to decide whether or not you are ready to begin a training program in VPS.

The Assessment provides an opportunity for you to reflect on your organization at this time and decide whether specific ingredients are present, partially present, or absent. The presence of the following ingredients make it more likely that training in VPS will be effective.

A key to each item and the meaning of each available score (i.e., +1, 0, or -1) follows the assessment chart.

Table 1 provides you with a way to understand what the scores mean, in terms of your organization's readiness to participate in VPS training.

Assessing Your Organization's Readiness for Training in VPS Skills and Tools

Instructions: Using the key on the following pages, rate your organization's readiness for training in VPS according to the following 10 items. Items may be rated on a "+1" to "-1" scale.

Factors	Items	Item exists (Score = +1)	Partially Exists (Score = 0)	Does Not Exist (Score = -1)
RIGHT TRAINEES	1. Skilled Peer Support Providers			
	2. Peers interested in work & school			
FUNDAMENTAL BELIEF	3. Culture believes in vocational recovery			
	4. Culture acknowledges importance of work			
	5. Culture acknowledges importance of school			
LOGISTICAL SUPPORT FOR TRAINING	6. Place and resources for in-person training			
	7. Time to participate in training			
LOGISTICAL SUPPORT FOR FOLLOW UP PRACTICE	8. Structure to support practice			
	9. Supervisors trained to supervise VPS			
	10. Key personnel knowledgeable about VPS			
	Column Totals	(Total "+1")		(Total "-1")
	(Total "+ " scores and "- " scores)	TOTAL SCORE		

Training Assessment Key

Item 1. Skilled Peer Support Providers. Skilled peer support staff must be available to offer VPS. We recommend that at least six peer supporters be in place for training. Small organizations may partner with other agencies in the same region to create a group of trainees, if they do not have sufficient peer support staff to make up a full class.

Score as follows the extent to which you have a sufficient pool of appropriate candidates for VPS training:

Score “1”: **Item exists.** Six or more skilled peer support staff are in place.

Score “0”: **Item partially exists.** The organization has fewer than six peer support staff, but can work with other agencies to create a full class of trainees.

Score “-1”: **Item does not exist.** The organization has fewer than six peer support staff and cannot collaborate with others to create a class of six or more.

Item 2. Peers are Interested in Work and School. In order to train peer staff in VPS, it is important that peer staff: 1) feel some dissatisfaction with the knowledge and skill they currently have and 2) are interested in supporting the work and school aspirations of the people they serve.

Score as follows the extent to which there is interest and enthusiasm, among the peer staff you are considering for training, in learning how to support people to engage in work and school:

Score “1”: **Item exists.** A majority of the peer support staff indicate that they are interested and enthusiastic; no peer supporters are opposed to getting trained.

Score “0”: **Item partially exists.** Approximately half of the peer support staff indicate that they are interested and enthusiastic; some peer supporters are opposed to it.

Score “-1”: **Item does not exist.** Almost no peer support staff indicate that they are interested and enthusiastic.

Item 3. Culture believes in vocational recovery. Research details the possibility for individuals, who have experienced the impact of serious mental illnesses, to recover and have meaningful lives (Harding & Zahniser, 1995; Farkas 2007). Organizations, in which the prevailing culture accepts the notion that people also can develop the skills and supports necessary to have meaningful employment and that people can and do find meaningful work, are more likely to be congruent with the values and concepts of VPS.

Score as follows the extent to which the organization communicates the possibility of vocational recovery for the individuals it serves:

Score “1”: **Item exists.** Organizational leadership/senior management indicates this belief through written policy or procedures.

Score “0”: **Item partially exists.** Organizational leadership/senior management indicates support of this belief through verbal statements (e.g., team meetings, community meetings, supervision, etc.).

Score “-1”: **Item does not exist.** Organizational leadership/senior management either make no statements or make negative statements about the possibilities for vocational recovery.

Item 4. Culture acknowledges the importance of work. A belief that employment is important to recovery is key to learning about and offering supports through VPS. When negative messages about work (e.g., possibility of stress, induced relapse, potential loss of benefits, worries about the person’s lack of resilience) are transmitted to the people served by the staff and the organization; people receiving services are less likely to consider employment as part of their recovery, and VPS training becomes irrelevant to the staff.

Score as follows the extent to which the organization, through its leadership and senior management, acknowledge that work is an important domain for work of the organization:

Score “1”: **Item exists.** Organizational leadership/senior management indicates a belief in work through written policy and/or procedures.

Score “0”: **Item partially exists.** Organizational leadership/senior management indicates a belief in the importance of work through verbal statements only (e.g. in team and/or community meetings, supervision).

Score “-1”: **Item does not exist.** Organizational leadership/senior management either make no statements or make negative statements about the importance of work.

Item 5. Culture acknowledges importance of school. Organizations that are open to working with educational aspirations are more likely to be open to supporting training in VPS than those that are not. Organizations that are willing to support participants, who are considering work or school, are generally the most interested in VPS training.

Score as follows the extent to which the organization communicates the importance of school or educational aspirations through its mission and mandate.

Score “1”: **Item exists.** Organizational leadership/senior management indicates a belief in education through written policy or procedures.

Score “0”: **Item partially exists.** Organizational leadership/senior management indicates a belief in the importance of school through verbal statements (e.g., team meetings, community meetings, supervision, etc.).

Score “-1”: **Item does not exist.** Organizational leadership/senior management either make no statements or make negative statements about the importance of educational aspirations.

Item 6. Place and resources for in-person training. Having a dedicated space in which to provide training increases focus and attention and makes the process of training more effective. Five to six days of in-person training is the recommended amount of time required to deliver training to increase the ability of peer support staff to offer VPS. A room that is available for the duration of the training and has the capacity for: participants to hear clearly and without distraction; comfortable seating, with chairs that can be moved around in different configurations (e.g., to do role plays or small group exercises); showing PowerPoint slides and using demonstration aids (e.g., flipchart, white board); and writing surfaces (e.g., desks, tables) will support a successful training environment.

Score as follows the organization’s capacity to provide needed resources for in-person training:

Score “1”: **Item exists.** The organization has a dedicated training room, as described, for the duration of the training period with all resources needed.

Score “0”: **Item partially exists.** The organization has access to rooms; resources must be brought in.

Score “-1”: **Item does not exist.** Access to training rooms is limited, training space must be shared/resources are limited.

Item 7. Time to participate in training. VPS requires participants to remain in a classroom for five to six days, over a period of time (i.e., weeks, months). Within this time, participants engage in discussions, learn new concepts, and practice new skills. Outside of the training room, participants are asked to practice new VPS skills and utilize VPS tools with the individuals they support. Finally, participants are invited to engage in skill support sessions with trainers, by telephone, webinar, or other methods of communication, in order to develop expertise.

VPS training is most effective when participants are released from regular duties during the classroom and skill support sessions, without telephone calls, other meetings, and agency business, while they focus on the development of new skills. Training sessions are designed in collaboration with the agency so that training intervals (i.e., in two-day blocks or in half-day sessions) best fit the agency’s schedule as much as possible.

Score as follows the organization’s ability to release participants during training, skill supervision, and other planned VPS training activities.

Score “1”: **Item exists.** The organization can release participants completely for training.

Score “0”: **Item partially exists.** The organization expects participants to take calls or attend to agency business as needed during training time.

Score “-1”: **Item does not exist.** Participant duties remain as usual throughout the training, and the participant is expected to be in the classroom as much as possible, but only when not needed for agency business.

Item 8. Structure to support practice. VPS is a competency development training program. Skills are developed by practicing them with people participating in peer support, and then reviewing the use of new skills and tools with supervisors and trainers.

Initial training practical assignments include researching, visiting, and/or talking with vocational service providers; detailing elements of one’s own vocational recovery story; and using new tools with people who are interested in exploring and working toward vocational aspirations. Organizations effective in getting expected staff skill and knowledge outcomes plan ahead to support trainees in this work. Organizations may need to consider compensation for peer support staff for extra work time (e.g., time off, extra pay), depending on the agreements about learning opportunities in the workplace. In addition, organizations may need to consider how VPS activities will be paid for within existing service components and billing requirements, or create new categories for billing to occur, if billing is a consideration for the organization. Organizations with peer support personnel may have such billing categories in place already.

Score as follows the extent to which the organization has a plan in place to support trainee practice with individuals served by the agency:

Score “1”: **Item exists.** The organization has a plan or has standard methods in place to support skill practice that can accommodate VPS training.

Score “0”: **Item partially exists.** Agency is willing to develop a plan to support skill practice.

Score “-1”: **Item does not exist,** Agency expects participants to absorb extra time and effort on their own and/or expects them to role play with people outside the service.

Item 9: Supervisors are trained to supervise VPS. VPS adds specialized knowledge to the foundational training of peer supporters. Organizations hiring peer specialists may or may not have supervisors, who are either themselves peer support workers or who are specifically trained to supervise peers. Supervisory training in VPS enhances the basic VPS training because

these supervisors can then provide appropriate feedback to strengthen practices assigned by VPS trainers.

Score as follows the extent to which the agency has VPS peer supervision available.

Score “1”: **Item exists.** The organization has identified supervisors willing and able to participate in VPS training/VPS supervisor training.

Score “0”: **Item partially exists.** The organization has supervisors willing to participate in training, but supervisors are not peer staff.

Score “-1”: **Item does not exist.** Organization does not have the capacity for this kind of supervision and has no plans to obtain it in the near future.

Item 10. Key personnel knowledgeable about VPS. Experience has shown that agencies and organizations in which the key personnel are well versed in VPS are more effective at supporting peers trained in VPS. Non-peer key personnel only may need to understand the basic principles, concepts, and processes, without being skilled themselves in its delivery. Organizations who are willing to train, not only their peer support staff, but also administrators, managers, trainers, and other key personnel are more effective at supporting the use of VPS. Trained administrators and managers can operationalize the VPS initiative through procedural updates and organizational mandates. Trainers can support skill growth by adding to and updating new skills as staff work with the material.

Score as below the extent to which the organization has identified key staff to participate in the training to support VPS delivery.

Score “1”: **Item exists.** Organization has key staff who are willing and able to participate in VPS training.

Score “0”: **Item partially exists.** Organization would like to involve key staff, but there are insufficient numbers of staff who are willing.

Score “-1”: **Item does not exist.** Organizations have no key staff available willing to learn VPS at this time.

Understanding your Readiness for Training Assessment Score

How do I understand the Total Score we got?

To get the Total Score, add up the “+1” column and the “-1” column. The remaining score is your agency’s Total Score relative to your organization’s Training Readiness.

The Table below provides an interpretation of the final score.

Table 1: Understanding VPS Training Readiness

Scores: 7-10	Organization is ready to begin training.
Scores: 4 – 6	Organization may be ready, but needs some additional work or assistance to be able to deliver the most effective training.
Scores: 0 - 3	Organization is not ready to begin VPS training at this time.

Based on your self-assessment, you may decide to begin training in VPS at this time.

Alternately, you may decide to take more time to prepare for training based on the factors that may not be strong at this moment. You may decide to build up your organization’s culture, build partnerships with other agencies who employ peer specialists, or develop other factors that may be in the way of significant readiness. Or, you may decide that VPS training is not something the agency is ready to invest in at this time.

If you decide that you are sufficiently interested to move ahead, but need more preparation time, you can do some of the preparation yourself and/or decide to obtain consultation to help you to increase your readiness to train for, and offer, VPS.

The following pages offer some recommendations for strategies to support your organization to develop your readiness for training and implementation of VPS. You also may contact the authors for additional consultation and/or technical assistance.

Developing Readiness for Training

If your organization assesses its readiness and finds that it is less ready than is necessary to support VPS training, you have several options to consider. You may choose to go ahead and conduct training, regardless of your readiness, knowing that you may have to deal with problems either in completing the training or using the training effectively in the organizations. You may choose not to go ahead with VPS training and perhaps reconsider it at a later time. Lastly, you may decide to invest in making changes that will make it more likely that the training will be effective in your organization. The following strategies are designed to help support the option of making changes to support participation in training.

What if we don't have the right trainees to begin VPS training?

If you do not have six or more peer support workers on staff, it may be helpful for your agency to foster collaborations with other organizations who hire peer support workers and who may also be interested in developing their employment services. With more collaboration or just more discussion about VPS, you may then be able to identify six or more peers who could be potential VPS trainees.

What if our potential trainees are not interested in supporting work and/or school?

If you do have skilled peer support workers, but do not have enough staff who are interested in supporting work or school, you may want to provide your staff with resources about the relative importance of these areas to individuals' recovery journey. Resources, such as articles, video interviews of people in recovery and their perspective on work or school, or websites (for example, *Employment and Vocational Recovery Repository*: cpr.bu.edu/resources). Contacting a local peer-run organization or advocacy organization can be very helpful in addressing this issue. They may suggest coming out to do a presentation for your staff or recommend other helpful resources.

You also may decide that strengthening the organizational culture in regard to the importance of work/school is a key ingredient to raising your "readiness score." Organizations exist which have experience in providing consultation in improving the "work orientation" of agencies serving individuals with mental illnesses, including serious mental illnesses¹. Some of these

¹ Some examples include

- Boston University, Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation website: cpr.bu.edu/develop
- Transformation Center, Boston, MA, web site: transformation-center.org
- Center for Community Inclusion website: www.communityinclusion.org

organizations, like Boston University’s Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation, specifically provide online and in-person technical assistance on improving organizational support for vocational recovery.

What if we don’t have the fundamental beliefs needed to begin VPS training?

If you are an administrator, who believes that vocational recovery is possible and that the domains of work and school are critical to the recovery journey of the individuals you serve, but find that you do not have much support for these beliefs in your organization, we suggest some of the same strategies as the ones suggested to strengthen peer support staff interest. Providing resources (e.g., articles, videos, website links) found in the *Employment and Vocational Recovery Repository* or other websites can be useful in sparking interest in your senior management staff. Other strategies, such as the following have been used to improve agency willingness to focus on work and school:

- Having organization-wide discussion groups on the importance of work and school to recovery.
- Bringing in speakers who are in recovery themselves and who can speak to the impact work and school has had on their own recovery.
- Discussing work and school in agency general meetings, team reviews, management team meetings.
- Including a section in your intake procedures focused on work and school aspirations;
- Discussing these areas in agency program evaluations.

What if we don’t have the logistical support needed for VPS training?

Often the idea of setting aside five days for training can seem daunting to an organization busy serving people with pressing needs. VPS training is flexible and can be delivered in different configurations (e.g., one full week, several sessions of two days each, half-day sessions, etc.) spaced over varying amounts of time to best support the organization. Organizations without their own training resources/rooms commonly obtain space in community settings (e.g., religious organizations, libraries). Collaboration with other organizations interested in VPS training also can augment your organization’s training resources.

What if we don’t have logistical support for the follow up?

Practicing VPS skills: Practicing and using the new knowledge and skills being developed in the sessions are key to actually developing expertise in VPS. Thinking through the practicalities of having staff practice something new with the people they support as well as having to go into

the community to interview those outside your organization about various aspects of work and school, go a long way to making the training effective.

Sometimes including key personnel in a work group focused on supporting the follow up to VPS training can be helpful to solve structural problems that may come up when thinking out such a plan. Having key personnel included, who are knowledgeable about VPS, will ensure that their solutions actually do support the training (see item 10, Assessment Chart, *Training Readiness*). Holding a brief introductory seminar on VPS before deciding to go ahead with the training program can help key personnel understand both the training process and the content.

Billing: Billing concerns are critical to consider. Since *vocational* peer support is a type of peer support itself, VPS services often can be paid for in the same way as general peer support is paid for in the organization. Organizations experiencing difficulties in paying for peer support can obtain technical assistance and consultation to identify strategies others have used. Websites, such as that of the International Association of Peer Supporters (inaops.org) can be a useful starting place to find this information.

Supervision: Organizations, who have hired peer support staff, may or may not have supervisors on staff who are themselves peer supporters or who are trained to supervise peer support staff specifically. Such organizations might consider contracting with agencies who do have such supervisors on staff or private individuals trained to supervise peer support staff to provide VPS supervision.

Training Key Personnel: Key personnel may wonder why they are being asked to participate in some form of training about VPS. Senior staff, program managers, in-house trainers are better able to help peer support staff follow through on both their training practice and in their use of the VPS skills after the training if they understand what VPS is and is not and know the concepts, principles, and processes.

Program Characteristics That Reflect the Effective Use of Vocational Peer Support

Once training has been completed, peer support staff will want to use their new skills and knowledge. Organizations that develop certain program characteristics are more likely to be able to incorporate VPS skill delivery as part of their ongoing peer support service, as well as more likely to integrate or coordinate efforts made by peer support staff using VPS with other employment services or initiatives in the organization.

Vocational Peer Support does not and cannot live in a vacuum. It is grounded in a recovery orientation and is effective when offered within programs that work from a belief that everyone has the potential to move forward with their lives. Both programmatic structures and philosophical underpinnings, as outlined below, can create the environment needed to support vocational recovery and the use of VPS skills.

Program Characteristics

Various programmatic characteristics may help your organization to foster vocational recovery through the use of Vocational Peer Support. These include infrastructure components, such as: Mission, Values, Policies, Evaluation, Leadership, Program Activities, Procedures, Documentation, Setting, Staffing, Hiring, Training, Supervision, and Documentation (adapted from Anthony, Cohen, Farkas, & Gagne, 2002).

Unless your organization focuses completely on peer support and the provision of vocational recovery supports, only some of the components or programs within your organization will be working to facilitate vocational recovery and, therefore, use VPS. In the process of implementing VPS practices, it is important to have some benchmarks to use in order to know if you are “on the right track.”

The Assessment of Program Characteristics is designed to help you think about the extent to which your organization currently includes Vocational Peer Support to support people to go to work and school. We suggest that you assess your agency’s progress on these items periodically in order to ensure that you are delivering services congruent with VPS. Some agencies assess themselves every six months after the training and as they begin implementation. Others do it once a year or less regularly. The more frequently you reflect on your progress along these characteristics, the more likely you are to become or remain consistent with VPS.

Rate the extent to which each characteristic is “very true,” “true,” or “not true” of your organization, using a score of 1, 2, or 3. An explanation of how to interpret your score is provided at the bottom of the Assessment chart.

Assessing Program Characteristics that Reflect the Effective Use of Vocational Peer Support

The chart on the next couple of pages assesses the extent to which your organization has incorporated VPS by identifying programmatic characteristics that foster vocational recovery and the use of VPS skills in your organization.

On the chart, rate your organization on the characteristics below using the following scale:

To what degree are the following statements true for your organization?
3: Very true 2: Somewhat true 1: Not true

Program Dimension	Description	Level of your Organization 3 – 2 - 1
Program Mission	The program has a mission that includes the belief that everyone also has the potential for vocational recovery.	
Organizational Values	Recovery values, such as respect for the whole person, partnership, choice, self-determination, and hope are the basis for the organization or agency.	
Program Values	VPS values, such as choice and hope for vocational recovery, also are reflected throughout the program in which VPS is being delivered. For example, there is an expectation (and not just the outside possibility) of vocational recovery for all service users.	
Policies	Program policies reflect the values of recovery and VPS. For example, a policy may state that service recipients have the right to choose whom they want to support them; or that service participants will be supported in considering, choosing, getting, and keeping the vocational roles they prefer.	

Program Dimension	Description	Level of your Organization 3 – 2 – 1
Organization Evaluation	Organizational outcomes are person-driven and regularly include recovery outcomes (e.g. an increase in involvement in home, health, purpose, community).	
Program Evaluation	The program evaluates outcomes of vocational recovery (e.g., enrollment in educational program, completed application for state VR services, applying for a preferred job, keeping a past probationary period).	
Agency Leadership	The leadership of the organization reinforces the vision of recovery for all.	
Program Leadership	The leadership of the program reinforces the vision of vocational recovery for all across program components.	
Program Activities	Program activities reflect the culture and preferences of service participants.	
	Program activities are designed to support service participants as they consider, choose, get, and keep vocational roles and environments.	
	Program activities are designed to reflect the mutually supportive relationships of peer supporters who use VPS.	
Procedures	Program procedures require staff to honor the preferences of people who work with peer specialists who use VPS, and avoid the pitfall of assigning participants to services they have not chosen.	
	Program procedures provide steps for service participants to leave peer support services that use VPS as a legitimate choice.	
	Program procedures reflect VPS values and activities, such as choice about vocational goals, having a voice in creating vocational plans.	
	Program procedures detail for staff how to structure activities related to considering, choosing, getting, and keeping work and/or school.	
Documentation	Notes and other records that document VPS-related activities are part of the official agency overall record keeping system.	
	Record keeping includes mandated sections on considering, choosing, getting, keeping work or school, not only clinical or behavioral interventions.	

Program Dimension	Description	Level of your Organization 3 – 2 – 1
Setting	<p>The physical layout and décor of the agency reflect the demographics of the service participants served by peer supporters using VPS (i.e., culture, age, gender). Magazines, posters, decorations, etc. reflect the main message of overall and vocational recovery.</p>	
Staffing	<p>People in recovery are in the leadership ranks and are represented in all categories of agency positions.</p>	
Hiring	<p>Staff are hired based on either certification as peer support worker or willingness to get certification in peer support, and their willingness to be trained in VPS. Staff, who will be trained in and use VPS, are hired with input of persons in recovery/service recipients. Peer staff are hired based on experience and potential or current capacity for offering VPS.</p>	
Training	<p>Agency staff are trained at <i>exposure-experience</i> level in recovery-oriented service delivery and its interventions, and at least <i>exposure</i>-level training in VPS. Peer staff receive training in knowledge, skills, and tools of VPS: <i>expertise</i>-level training for direct supporters, <i>experience</i>-level for supervisors, and <i>exposure</i>-level for leadership.</p>	
Supervision	<p>Supervision includes coaching and support of peer staff, with attention to the skills and knowledge needed to provide VPS.</p>	
	<p>When possible, supervision is provided by more experienced peer support staff, who also are trained in VPS.</p>	
RATING YOUR AGENCY	ADD YOUR SCORES:	
	TOTAL POSSIBLE: 72	72

Understanding Your Score

Table 2. Assessing Program Characteristics: Understanding Your Score

Score	Implementation Interpretation
47 or more	High Implementation Agency infrastructure is currently very consistent with VPS practices.
25-46	Moderate Implementation Agency Infrastructure is currently moderately consistent with VPS practices.
24 or less	Low Implementation Agency infrastructure is currently not very consistent with VPS practices.

Strengthening Program Characteristics' Consistency with VPS Practices: What if we score "moderate" to "low" in program characteristics consistent with VPS principles and practice?

If your organization wants to improve its delivery of VPS, it can move forward on its own or with consultation and technical assistance. If you choose to move ahead on your own, you may find many of the same strategies outlined in the section on "Developing Readiness for Training" to be useful, especially around strengthening beliefs and the involvement of key personnel, including supervisors. You also may wish to develop a "Task Force" of participants who have completed VPS, their supervisors, and key personnel who have been exposed to the concepts and principles of the practice. The Task Force can be helpful especially in working through program characteristics having to do with program activities, procedures, documentation, setting, supervision practices, and hiring practices that will support a peer specialist's ability to use VPS as part of his or her repertoire on a regular basis.

There are many organizations that provide consultation about improving peer support services in general within mental health organizations. Some already have been mentioned in this Implementation Guide. You may find other local organizations with the expertise to provide consultation on improving the functioning of your peer support services. When considering consultation services, it is important to be confident that those providing technical assistance have peers on their team, are trained in peer support, as well as being experts in organizational change and development. As of this writing, Boston University's Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation, the developers of VPS, provide the most knowledgeable consultation specifically about delivering VPS.

For Supervisors

Introduction to VPS Supervision

Who Should Supervise VPS-trained Staff?

Peer Support is a specialized, professional field that carries its own ethical standards, practices, and values. It is important that supervisors have their own training and experience in peer support practice, particularly as a peer support specialist, and that they have demonstrated knowledge of:

- The values and value of Peer Support
- Recovery from the impact of a psychiatric diagnosis
- Role/s of Peer Supporters
- Peer Support competencies
- Peer Support ethics

In addition, it is essential that supervisors of VPS-trained staff have training in Vocational Peer Support, so that they are skilled in, or at least knowledgeable about, the following:

- The approach and major concepts of VPS
- Vocational Recovery
- The values of VPS
- The framework of VPS
- VPS skills and competencies
- The tools that are available to support VPS practice

What is VPS Supervision?

Supervision of the VPS-trained peer support specialist is as an ongoing, collaborative, and mutually-supportive process. Both supervisor and supervisee can benefit from each other's experience, and both have expertise to bring to the table.

When should VPS Supervision and support be offered?

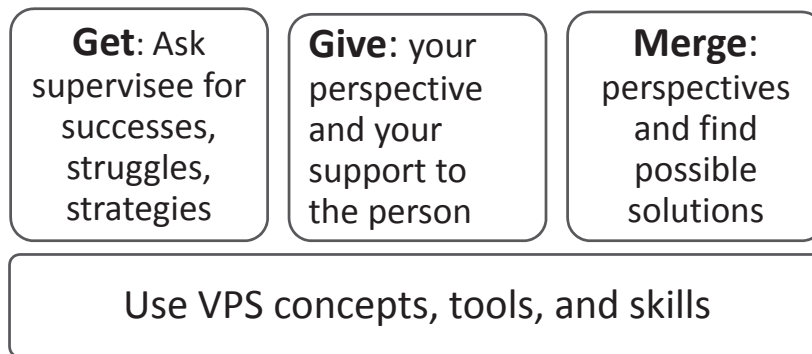
VPS supervision is appropriate in many circumstances and can be offered on a regular basis or when there is a problem to solve or an accomplishment to recognize. Consider o VPS supervision:

- In regularly scheduled appointments
- When specific questions arise
- Before, during, and after observing a peer support session
- When requested
- When issues with the employee arise
- When exemplary work is being done

Operationalizing VPS Supervision

To support the Peer Support specialist in the most concrete way, observe a peer support interaction and be available to facilitate feedback. *Facilitating* feedback is different from *providing* feedback, in that the supervisee is very much involved in the supervision.

We suggest using the following as an effective framework for providing supervision, which facilitates feedback: “Get-Give-Merge.”



To operationalize this framework, consider the following:

1. Get the input of VPS-trained staff in defining their roles and responsibilities.
2. ²Remind VPS-trained staff of their training and VPS tools that are available to them to support vocational recovery.
3. Keep the peer role *peer*, i.e., avoid confusing clinical and peer roles, such as asking VPS-trained peer specialists to provide medication management or case management.
4. Offer and reinforce the message that the provision of VPS is valued and appreciated.
5. Encourage mutual peer support of VPS-trained staff.
6. Support ongoing development of VPS and general Peer Support skills.

² Items 2-6 adapted from peersforprogress.org/take-action/manage-peer-support#recruitment

VPS Practice Checklist for Supervision: Introduction

What is the VPS Practice Checklist for? The purpose of the VPS Practice Checklist is to enhance the success of the VPS-trained peer in supporting vocational recovery. Supervisors may want to use this list to support staff capacity and provision of VPS supports, as well as a supervisory framework. Peer support staff using VPS in their work also may want to use this checklist to support and inform their own practice.

What is in the Practice Checklist? Each major VPS Module has its own Practice Checklist. Each Practice Checklist contains *statements* and *ratings* by which to evaluate practice.

- The *statements* describe an essential skill required to do the work of VPS for that Module.
- The *ratings* offer an opportunity to evaluate the use of the corresponding essential skill. The 5-point Scale goes from “all the time” to “never,” indicating how often the skill is utilized.

How can the Practice Checklist be used?

- **Before using VPS:** To prepare for VPS work by reviewing essential skills before meeting with the person.
- **During the use of VPS:** To share the Checklist(s) with the person served. VPS is a shared process, not one in which the paid supporter holds and directs the process.
- **After using VPS:** To review one's own work in providing Vocational Peer Support. Checklists are written from the perspective of the peer supporter.
- **In supervision:** To review the use of VPS skills in peer work, to support the peer worker to provide the best possible support of vocational aspirations, and for use in evaluation.

What else is important to know about using the Checklist?

- VPS skills are designed to *add* to the skills and knowledge that peer support specialists already have, not replace or displace general peer support competencies.
- Not all skills listed are intended to be used in every circumstance or with every person.
- VPS is person-directed and interacts with the person’s starting point, needs, direction, and preferences.

VPS Practice Checklist

Module 1: Overviewing Vocational Peer Support and Vocational Recovery

Instructions: Give each statement below a **rating** indicating how often you did it.

5: all the time, 4: most of the time, 3: some of the time, 2: once in a while, 1: never

<i>When working with the person on Overviewing VPS and Vocational Recovery, I ...</i>	Rating
... oriented the person to the meaning of Vocational Peer Support.	
... discussed other experiences they have had with peer support and employment support.	
... identified the meaning of Vocational Recovery with the person, including his or her own definition of it.	
... described what a “scaffold” is and explored the person’s experience with scaffolding.	
... explored what kinds of scaffolds would be useful to the person.	
... shared snippets of my own Vocational Recovery Story as was useful to the person to foster understanding of VPS and hope for vocational recovery.	
... worked with the person to identify the benefits of VPS.	
... explored with the person his or her vision of vocational recovery.	
<p>If you’ve overviewed Vocational Recovery and Vocational Peer Support well, the person should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe his or her understanding of vocational recovery, • Describe his or her understanding of Vocational Peer Support, and whether he or she wants to use it, • Discuss with you desired scaffolds that might be useful as you move into the rest of VPS. 	

VPS Practice Checklist

Module 2: Partnering for Vocational Recovery

Instructions: Give each statement below a **rating** indicating how often you did it.

5: all the time, 4: most of the time, 3: some of the time, 2: once in a while, 1: never

<i>When Partnering to foster a relationship within VPS work, I ...</i>	Rating
... reduced distractions that could get in the way of our work.	
... oriented the person to the what, the why, and the how of partnering, including each of our roles and again as we worked on VPS activities in order to facilitate full participation and understanding.	
... asked open-ended questions to invite the person’s perspective, sandwiching them between other responses as applicable.	
... paraphrased what the person said, felt, and/or experienced without adding judgment or opinion.	
... used silence to give the person room to express him/herself.	
... thought through the benefits and drawbacks of sharing my own vocational recovery story, including whether sharing it was primarily for the person’s benefit.	
... shared snippets of my vocational recovery story to inspire hope for a meaningful vocational life.	
<p>When I partner well with the person, the person should be able to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me that he or she feels heard and/or understood, • Describe how to participate in a part of the VPS process, • Give his or her perspective, experience, and opinions without fear of judgment. 	

VPS Practice Checklist

Module 3: Building Motivational Foundations

Instructions: Give each statement below a **rating** indicating how often you did it.

5: all the time, 4: most of the time, 3: some of the time, 2: once in a while, 1: never

<i>When exploring and building Motivational Foundations for work and school, I...</i>	Rating
... described Motivational Foundations: Need, Beliefs, Information, Support.	
... showed and discussed examples of Building Motivational Foundations.	
... worked with the person to explore a Need for a vocational change.	
... discussed Beliefs about vocational change and vocational recovery.	
... reviewed Information he or she has and/or needs about the world of work and self in relation to work/school.	
... explored the level and types of Supports needed to make vocational change.	
... decided whether using a tool or having a discussion was the best way to explore each Foundation.	
... planned with the person ways to Build Motivational Foundations through gathering more information, resources, support, or experiences over time.	
... shared a snippet of my Vocational Recovery Story to inspire hope for Considering work, school, or other vocational activities and roles.	
<p>When I Build Motivational Foundations well, the other person should be able to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify at least two of the four Foundations, • Describe his or her own Need, Beliefs, level of Information, and/or Support for a vocational change, • Discuss his or her plan for Building Motivational Foundations if needed. 	

VPS Practice Checklist

Module 4: Choosing: Supporting Choice in Work and School

Instructions: Give each statement below a **rating** indicating how often you did it.

5: all the time, 4: most of the time, 3: some of the time, 2: once in a while, 1: never

<i>“When supporting Choice in work and school options, I...”</i>	Rating
... oriented to the definition, benefits, and process of Choosing a meaningful vocational goal, and reviewed relevant examples.	
... explored past work, volunteer, military, and school experiences in order to identify preferences vocational decision-making.	
... listed with the person questions that will help the person to gather needed information about job, career, or school/training options.	
... worked with the person to brainstorm possible job or educational settings to research further, based on the person’s interests and initial criteria.	
... co-created a plan for gathering and tracking information about interesting options.	
... offered scaffolds as the person gathered and tracked information about vocational options.	
... supported the person to decide on a direction to head in, given all of the information we gathered.	
... shared snippets of my Vocational Recovery Story in order to inspire hope for Choosing a career, job, or training program.	
<p>When I scaffold the person to Choose a direction for work or school, the person should be able to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify what Choosing is vs. Considering, Getting or Keeping jobs or school, • Describe his or her own preferences based on past experiences, • Gather information about options, • Make a decision about a vocational direction or identify that more information is needed. 	

VPS Practice Checklist

Module 5: Getting into Work and School

Instructions: Give each statement below a **rating** indicating how often you did it.

5: all the time, 4: most of the time, 3: some of the time, 2: once in a while, 1: never

<i>“When supporting Getting into work or school, I...”</i>	Rating
... explored the meaning and value, to the person, of Getting into Jobs and School.	
... showed and discussed an overview example of Getting.	
... worked on a Getting Plan with the person for work or school.	
... identified the scaffolds that will be needed to move forward with Getting into a preferred position or program.	
... explored utilizing complementary vocational and other services to support getting into a job or school.	
... showed the Disclosure Example to illuminate possible pros and cons of disclosing a disability.	
... invited the person to explore concerns and hopes about disclosure.	
... supported the person to decide about whether, when, where, to whom, and how to disclose a disability.	
... shared a snippet of my Vocational Recovery Story in order to inspire hope for Getting into work or school settings.	
<p>If I scaffolded “Getting” well, the person should be able to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe a few items in his or her Getting plan, • Identify at least one way of getting support from the peer provider, • List at least one concern and one hope about disclosing a disability, • Tell whether and how disclosure would happen at work or at school. 	

VPS Practice Checklist

Module 6: Keeping Jobs and School

Instructions: Give each statement below a **rating** indicating how often you did it.

5: all the time, 4: most of the time, 3: some of the time, 2: once in a while, 1: never

<i>“When supporting Keeping jobs and school, I...”</i>	Rating
... explored the meaning of Keeping Jobs and School.	
... showed and discussed an Overview Example of Keeping.	
... explained the difference between explicit, implicit, and personally important expectations.	
... worked with the person to come up with a plan to get information on the expectations in the environment.	
... worked with the person and/or the employer or school to break down broad job or school expectations into skills and support needs, or worked with vocational services who helped with this.	
... identified ways the person can learn new skills and practice rusty ones.	
... discussed needs for people, place, thing, and activity Supports.	
... provided scaffolds needed to develop skills and supports.	
... explored reasonable accommodations and what they mean to the person.	
... shared snippets of my own Vocational Recovery Story in order to inspire hope for Keeping a job or school program.	
<p>If I have supported “Keeping” well, the person should be able to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe what Keeping is as different from Getting, Choosing, or Considering, • Identify what one of the expectations is of him or her at work or school, • List at least one way in which a skill or support, including potential accommodations, could be developed to Keep the job or training program. 	

VPS Practice Checklist

Module 7: Coordinating with Vocational and Employment Service Providers

Instructions: Give each statement below a **rating** indicating how often you did it.

5: all the time, 4: most of the time, 3: some of the time, 2: once in a while, 1: never

<i>“When supporting the use of other vocational or employment support services, I...”</i>	Rating
... explored the meaning of Coordinating with vocational and employment service providers.	
... showed and discussed an example of the process.	
... worked with the person to weigh the benefits and risks of connecting with service providers in order to achieve vocational goals.	
... discovered more information about various employment and vocational service programs with the person, including benefits and risks of involvement.	
... supported the person’s decision-making about using peer and other services to support his or her vocational recovery.	
... scaffolded the person’s use of employment, education, or other services.	
... communicated with and supported negotiations with service providers and/or systems as desired by the person.	
... shared snippets of my Vocational Recovery Story to inspire hope about working with employment, education, and other service providers.	
<p>If I Coordinate with Vocational and Employment Service Providers well, the person should be able to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weigh the pros and cons of using another provider in addition to VPS/peer support, • Describe some of the differences between providers, • Decide whether or not to utilize peer support to enhance the experience of using another provider. 	

VPS Practice Checklist

Module 8: Researching Information

Instructions: Give each statement below a **rating** indicating how often you did it.

5: all the time, 4: most of the time, 3: some of the time, 2: once in a while, 1: never

<i>“When supporting the gathering of quality information, I...”</i>	Rating
... discussed the meaning of Researching Information in VPS.	
... showed examples of the process of Researching Information.	
... worked with the person to get specific about research questions.	
... discovered quality Information Sources.	
... explored what types of information were the most useful.	
... provided scaffolds needed to gather, understand, and record information for future use.	
... evaluated the gathered information, looking at who, what, when, where and why the information is valid and useful.	
... shared snippets of my Vocational Recovery Story to encourage the person as he or she moved forward in the gathering of information.	
<p>If I have supported the gathering of quality information, the person should be able to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe what researching information is and why it’s important to his or her vocational recovery, • Define a research question, • Gather information from quality sources. 	

VPS Practice Checklist

Module 9: Supporting Informed Decisions about Benefits

Instructions: Give each statement below a **rating** indicating how often you did it.

5: all the time, 4: most of the time, 3: some of the time, 2: once in a while, 1: never

<i>“When supporting informed decisions about benefits, I...”</i>	Rating
... discussed the meaning of informed decision-making about disability benefits.	
... showed examples of the process to the person throughout.	
... worked with the person to find out what the person wanted and needed to understand about work and benefits.	
... shared information about Social Security Work Incentives as applicable and desired by the person.	
... went to the experts to validate and find out additional information.	
... provided scaffolds needed to support the person to gather resources, information, and verified personalized information about his or her benefits.	
... evaluated the gathered information, looking at who, what, when, where, and why the information is valid and useful.	
... shared snippets of my Vocational Recovery Story, in order to inspire hope for working while on benefits.	
<p>If I have supported the informed decision-making about disability benefits well, the person should be able to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe what informed decision-making about benefits is, • List his or her own questions about benefits and work, • Gather information from quality sources, • Work with the experts in figuring out his or her own benefits. 	

Tips for Supervisors of VPS-trained staff

Turnover

It is common for organizations to experience some level of turnover of staff, including peer staff. Experience tells us that it is easy for service participants and their vocational aspirations to get lost in the mix of staff changes. In the service of good program outcomes as well as good individual outcomes, it is advisable to pay close attention to the assignment and reassignment of people working with VPS-trained staff. Close supervision and support of the use of VPS skills in the context of organizational values and beliefs that support vocational recovery may decrease overall peer staff turnover.

Training other staff

The VPS curriculum is designed to train peer staff and is, in many ways, peer-specific. However, as we have mentioned previously, it may be useful for supervisors to participate in the training. This enables supervisors to be familiar with the conceptual pieces of VPS and to have the opportunity to develop skills that the peer specialists in their employ will be using.

In addition, it may be important to introduce other staff to the concepts and skills of Vocational Peer Support. Whether through a one-day overview of VPS or by inviting other key staff to the entire training, engaging your whole staff in getting to know what peer specialists do, and how they can work to support employment and education can be invaluable to the full integration of peer support staff, and to the support of the use of VPS in your organization.

Refresher trainings, or trainings of new staff may be an important avenue for capacity-building within the organization. *Refresher trainings* may be designed according to the needs of the organization and are built to focus on the specific skills and conceptual knowledge that the staff need to offer VPS. *Trainings for new staff* can be offered to new staff (and may be used simultaneously to refresh the knowledge and skill level of already-trained staff) in order to bring new staff up to capacity to deliver VPS.

When staffers should use VPS skills and Tools

It is not expected that peer staff use the concepts, skills and tools at all times or in all situations. Encourage the staff you supervise to look for opportunities to utilize VPS:

- To inspire hope for vocational recovery
- When a person is considering “what’s next” for him or her
- When a person is interested in thinking about work or school
- As people indicate an interest in working on setting or achieving vocational goals

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