



Preface

The revised fifth edition of *A Guide to Vocational Assessment* responds to the challenges of the 21st-century labor market offered to persons with significant mental or physical disabilities. This fifth edition strongly affirms the continuing efforts by rehabilitation professionals to change the traditional manner in which vocational assessment is conducted. It is my belief that several practices prevalent in evaluation badly under-serve a significant group of those with physical and mental disabilities, and particularly those from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Many of these practices are delivered in an academic or institutional context and often offer a rather narrow view of human career potential. Though these environments have generally responded diligently to the assessment needs of those with disabilities, the evaluation programs frequently rely on the centrality of standardized paper-and-pencil measures. Consequently, often the assessment results offer an incomplete picture of the actual capabilities, strengths, and career opportunities of the consumer. A more embracing knowledge of those with disabilities that includes a comprehensive framework is needed to assist this population on their career journeys.

The question is asked: Will those with significant disabilities be able to compete successfully for appropriate jobs in this 21st century, which is characterized by global integration and rapid technological changes? They can, if the vocational evaluation process identifies a wider scope of career potential and suggests the possible development of marketable skills, even specialized abilities. Specifically, this volume contributes to a larger understanding of human potential by reexamining historical evaluation approaches and explaining newer strategies.

The sweeping arms of globalization and changes in social and economic systems are further contributory factors that make it decidedly difficult for adults, especially those with disabilities, to compete successfully today for long-term, stable employment. This edition of *A Guide*

to Vocational Assessment acknowledges these modern phenomena, again presumes that many traditional assessment approaches are not appropriate for the modern job or career seeker, and suggests multiple evaluation approaches and insights that can be utilized to change the difficult to the possible and, eventually, to the probable. While many of this book's chapters underscore the utilization of traditional evaluation approaches, other chapters operationalize my added belief that vocational assessment is an individualized, creative, empowering, holistic process and experience of self-discovery. This edition's 15 chapters incorporate these issues, build on information explained in earlier editions, offer new material, and emphasize that the process of evaluation should identify the consumer's career-related strengths and potential to acquire specific skills. Today's worker with a disability must have these specialized skills to even be considered for productive employment.

Although 9 of the 15 chapter titles basically remain the same, the information in these chapters has been selectively revised from the fourth edition, with updated, expanded material, and, in some instances, reorganized for enhanced reader clarity. The other 6 chapters have been redesigned or redeveloped from the earlier edition. One of these chapters, Chapter 13, focuses exclusively on the transition-aged student, a topic receiving increased attention in vocational rehabilitation. Explained in this chapter is how more current research and practice have suggested newer, evaluation-related insights that can facilitate a more successful transition. Moreover, all of the chapters together contain more than 100 new references. All-new case examples have also been introduced for Chapter 3, and there are new case studies for each of the workbook's 15 chapters.

The workbook is intended, as it was in the fourth edition, for use with the text. Each chapter of the workbook provides discussion questions and exercises. This material has been selectively changed and reformulated to correspond to the respective chapter topic in the text. There are three new forms in the appendix that illustrate the information in Chapters 12 and 15. Of particular importance is the addition of a Suggested Format for the Vocational Assessment Report (see the Appendix and the forms located on the CD-ROM).

With these new features of the revised, fifth edition, this volume offers the perspective that rehabilitation agency expectations usually demand that assessment be conducted in a short period of time. The infor-

mation explained in several chapters, highlighting self-assessment methods and many nonstandardized and standardized measures, responds to the briefer time period. Another perspective states that the process of vocational evaluation offers assessment options to both the professional and the consumer. If the evaluation process is going to be relevant and appropriate to the needs of diverse populations with disabilities, then various approaches to consumer self-understanding should be available. This edition continues and reemphasizes the substantive theme of earlier editions that assessment choice and different methods are necessary if the evaluation process is to be responsive to this population's employment or career demands, and the changing 21st-century employment realities. Adaptability of assessment approaches is a further consideration in several of this edition's chapters, highlighting the needs of ethnic minorities and those with disabilities.

Vocational assessment is the foundational step toward consumers' becoming aware that they possess many of the capabilities required to achieve job marketability. Today, workers are seeking personal meaning and satisfaction in employment and career pursuits. Providing an empowering experience for the consumer during career development opportunities contributes to this personal fulfillment. The different approaches included in the process of vocational assessment, and again emphasized in this revised, fifth edition, represent empowering activities. In turn, such involvement and assumption of responsibility help the consumer in the process of self-discovery and of acquiring skills for competing successfully in career areas of the 21st century.

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