



AMERICAN REHABILITATION  
COUNSELING ASSOCIATION

## ARCA Pre-Conference Seminar at the National Symposium on Quality Employment 2025 hosted by the *Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Employment*

### Location:

University of Wisconsin-Madison

Memorial Union  
800 Langdon Street  
Madison, WI 53706

### Date/Time:

Tuesday, May 20 2024

Starting at 8am - 4:30pm



## Letter from the ARCA President

Welcome to the ARCA Pre-Conference at the Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Employment's National Symposium on Quality Employment 2025! We are honored to have you join us as we continue to champion the future of rehabilitation counseling through research, mentorship, and collaboration.

First, we extend our sincere gratitude to the VRTAC-QE at the University of Wisconsin-Madison for allowing us to join them in this important event. Their commitment to advancing quality employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities is invaluable, and we deeply appreciate their partnership in allowing ARCA to create a space where new professionals and students can showcase their contributions to the field.

At ARCA, we recognize that our field is shaped by those who dedicate themselves to advancing quality employment, access, and equity alongside individuals with disabilities. This pre-conference is designed to foster meaningful connections between students, new professionals, and experienced leaders—ensuring that fresh ideas and groundbreaking research have the space to thrive. Today's discussions, presentations, and shared insights will serve as building blocks for the future of rehabilitation counseling, strengthening our profession in an ever-changing landscape.

Your presence and participation here reflect a deep commitment not only to ARCA's mission but to partnering with individuals and communities to drive meaningful change. Now more than ever, we recognize the significance of our collective voice in shaping policy, practice, and opportunity. The challenges ahead are real, but so too is the unwavering passion and expertise of those in this room. The work you contribute today is paving the way for tomorrow's leaders, policies, and innovations.

Thank you for supporting ARCA and for being part of this important conversation. We look forward to seeing how your ideas and leadership will propel our profession forward!

Paige N. Dunlap, Ph.D., LCMHC-S, LPC, CRC, NCC, ACS, CVE

# Welcome



### Letter from the ARCA Pre-Conference Committee

Dear All,

Welcome to the American Rehabilitation Counseling Association's (ARCA) Celebrating Students and New Professionals: Pre-Conference Seminar at the Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Employment (VRTAC-QE)! We are thrilled to have you join us for ARCA's first-ever Pre-Conference Seminar at VRTAC-QE!

This collaboration between ARCA and VRTAC-QE provides a wonderful opportunity to align our shared goals of uniting rehabilitation professionals. We are truly honored to be part of this week's programming, and we extend our sincere appreciation to Dr. Timothy Tansey and the leadership and planning committee of the VRTAC-QE National Symposium on Quality Employment 2025 for the opportunity to come together and commit to VRTAC-QE's goal of further supporting state vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies and community partners in enhancing services for individuals with disabilities.

Our focus today is on celebrating students and new professionals—those who represent the future of our profession and who will help advance our beloved field of rehabilitation counseling. We have selected an exciting and diverse lineup of presentations, covering a wide range of topics from important considerations within the profession such as Medicaid coverage and program evaluation, to emerging trends such as generative AI.

We encourage you all to approach each session with curiosity, engage in meaningful discussions, meet and network with your fellow colleagues, and to join us in celebrating our fellow students and new professionals! We are so grateful for the vital role that each of you plays in supporting the field of rehabilitation counseling, and we appreciate your participation in this Pre-Conference Seminar.

Sincerely,  
Christine and Daniel  
Pre-Conference Seminar Committee Co-Chairs

# Program.

|                                |                                 |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>8:00 AM -<br/>8:30 AM</b>   | Registration and<br>Networking  |
| <b>8:30 AM -<br/>9:45 AM</b>   | Opening and<br>Panel Discussion |
| <b>10:00 AM -<br/>11:00 AM</b> | Workshop<br>Session 1           |
| <b>11:00 AM -<br/>11:15 AM</b> | Networking<br>Break             |
| <b>11:15 AM -<br/>12:15 PM</b> | Workshop<br>Session 2           |
| <b>12:15 PM -<br/>12:45 PM</b> | Networking<br>Lunch             |
| <b>12:45 PM -<br/>1:45 PM</b>  | Workshop<br>Session 3           |
| <b>1:45 PM -<br/>2:00 PM</b>   | Networking<br>Break             |
| <b>2:00 PM -<br/>3:00 PM</b>   | Workshop<br>Session 4           |
| <b>3:00 PM -<br/>3:15 PM</b>   | Networking<br>Break             |
| <b>3:15 PM -<br/>4:15 PM</b>   | Workshop<br>Session 5           |
| <b>4:15 PM -<br/>4:30 PM</b>   | Wrap-up                         |

# Agenda

Pre-Conference Seminar at VRTAC-QE

May 20



8:00am - 8:30am

## Registration & Networking

Meet and mingle with attendees



8:30am - 9:45am

## Opening and Panel Discussion Rehabilitation Counseling: Building on History and Moving Forward

Old Madison Room

Paige Dunlap, Andrea Nerlich, Allison Levine,  
and Trent Landon

Moderator: Christine Sacco-Bene



9:45am - 10:00am

## Break & Networking



10:00am - 11:00am

## Workshop Session 1

### Teamwork Matters in Counseling! Promoting Interprofessional Collaboration and Education Competencies in Rehabilitation Counseling

SungWon Yoon-Lee, Jinwon Suh, Courtney Q. Gallagher, Farbod Pour, Deshna  
Nagar, Martha Cameron, Attia Khan, Chaleece W. Sandberg, Jen Yung-Chen  
Chiu, and Liza M. Conyers

*National Pan-Hellenic Council room*

### The "Discovery" Process for Clients with Intellectual Disabilities: Walking the Rope between Customization and Standardization

Virakti Shah and Nicole Ditchman

*Beefeaters room*

### Medicaid Coverage for Individuals Re-Entering Society After Incarceration

Patrina Wong and Marcus Weather

*Old Madison room*



**11:00am - 11:15am** | **Break & Networking**



**11:15am - 12:15pm** | **Workshop Session 2**

**Inclusive Employment in Central Europe: Career Guidance and Job Placement in Underdeveloped Systems**

Anna Podlesna

*National Pan-Hellenic Council room*

**Self-compassion: Buffering the Impact of Disability**

Alexandra Kriofske Mainella

*Beefeaters room*

**Program Evaluation With a Capital E! Exploring the Importance and Best Practices**

Stuart Rumrill, Bryan Austin, John Kosciulek, Chun-Lung Lee, and David G. Strauser

*Old Madison room*



**12:15pm - 12:45pm** | **Lunch & Networking**



**12:45pm - 1:45pm** | **Workshop Session 3**

**Advocacy through Research: Addressing Social Determinants of Health and Employment Needs for People Living with HIV**

Jen Yung-Chen Chiu, Farbod Pour, Attia Khan, Liza Conyers, SungWon Yoon-Lee, Martha Cameron, and Deshna Nagar

*National Pan-Hellenic Council room*

**Making Vocational Rehabilitation Work for Individuals Living with Severe Mental Illness**

Garrett Huck

*Beefeaters room*

**Career Adaptability of Parents of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder**

Muharrem Koc (12:45-1:15)

*Old Madison room*

**Bias and Fairness in Assessment with Individuals with Disabilities**

Aylin Celik-Zencir and Muharrem Koc (1:15-1:45)

*Old Madison room*



**1:45pm - 2:00pm**

**Break & Networking**



**2:00pm - 3:00pm**

**Workshop Session 4**

**Facilitating Adjustment to Physical Disabilities through Gestalt Therapy in Rehabilitation Counseling**

Gabriela Rangel

*National Pan-Hellenic Council room*

**Working to Work: A Discussion of Trends, Opportunities, and Challenges of Advancing Meaningful Employment for Individuals with Severe Mental Illness**

Josh Carpenter and Allison Levine

*Beefeaters room*

**Invisible Challenges: Disability Acceptance, Workplace Accommodations, and Mental Health in Women with Chronic Autoimmune Conditions**

Uzma Khan

*Old Madison room*



**3:00pm - 3:15pm**

**Break & Networking**



**3:15pm - 4:15pm**

**Workshop Session 5**

**Impact of First Episode Psychosis on Transition Age Youth in the Career Path**

Eunjeong Ko

*National Pan-Hellenic Council room*

**Challenges and Innovations: Exploring the Ethical Use of Generative AI in Vocational Rehabilitation**

Nicole Ditchman, Bryan Austin, Amanda Boyd, and Georgianna Garrels-Rogers

*Beefeaters room*

**Rehabilitation Counseling for Justice-Involved Clients: Best Practices and Strategies**

Marissa Lockett and Melanie Poe

*Old Madison room*



**4:15pm - 4:30pm**

**Closing Remarks**

# Detailed Overview of ARCA Pre-Conference Seminar Presentations



# Presentations

8:30 a.m.-9:45 a.m.

## **Rehabilitation Counseling: Building on History and Moving Forward**

*Paige Dunlap, Andrea Nerlich, Allison Levine, and Trent Landon*

*Moderator: Christine Sacco-Bene*

A strong, unified presence is essential for advancing the Rehabilitation Counseling (RC) profession and effectively advocating for individuals with disabilities. This panel of Rehabilitation Counselor Educators will explore the significance of leveraging representation within RC professional organizations and fostering meaningful engagement with disability-focused groups. Panelists will discuss strategies for enhancing collaboration, amplifying advocacy efforts, and strengthening the profession's collective voice. Attendees will have the opportunity to engage in a dynamic discussion.

10:00a.m.-11:00 a.m.

## **Teamwork Matters in Counseling! Promoting Interprofessional Collaboration and Education Competencies in Rehabilitation Counseling**

*SungWon Yoon-Lee, Jinwon Suh, Courtney Q. Gallagher, Farbod Pour, Deshna Nagar, Martha Cameron, Attia Khan, Chaleece W. Sandberg, Jen Yung-Chen Chiu, and Liza M. Conyers*

As complex health issues increase in the global community, rehabilitation counselors must be well equipped/prepared as they enter interprofessional practices. The World Health Organization called for health care providers' collaborative practice, and according to the American Counseling Association (ACA) Code of Ethics and the 2024 Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) Standard, rehabilitation counselors must be prepared with knowledge and skills in interprofessional collaboration. Interprofessional collaboration and education competencies in rehabilitation counseling and other fields will be examined in this session, and the work with a non-profit organization will be presented as an example of interprofessional collaboration and how counselors can play their role in their research and advocacy practices. The implication and ethical consideration in interprofessional collaboration and education will be addressed.

## **The 'Discovery'" Process for Clients with Intellectual Disabilities: Walking the Rope between Customization and Standardization**

*Virakti Shah and Nicole Ditchman*

Customized Employment (CE) has received support at the national and local levels to create more opportunities for work for persons with disabilities, including those with intellectual disability (ID) (Inge et al., 2018). It leads to greater employee productivity and satisfaction for both the employee and employer (National Disability Institute). "Discovery" is the qualitative process to gather information regarding the potential employee, involving a team of service providers to consolidate data about client's knowledge, skills, abilities, job-related preferences and limitations posed by their disability. The idea of vocational assessment 'tools' might appear counterintuitive; they have been useful data collection means pertaining to the 'person' in the 'person-environment' fit that we prioritize in vocational rehabilitation (Vornholdt et al., 2017). Research identifies the lack of psychometric instruments or standard procedures for vocational assessment of persons with ID (Beveridge et al., 2019).

10:00a.m.-11:00 a.m. (continued)

### **Medicaid Coverage for Individuals Re-Entering Society After Incarceration**

*Patrina Wong and Marcus Weather*

PWD leaving carceral institutions and looking to re-enter society are thus subjected to a disadvantaged position from the start. The gap in Medicaid coverage, in addition to the potential health issues gained during incarceration, can very well become factors for recidivism and poor health outcomes. With new policies and changes being introduced, such as the Medicaid Reentry Act, one must stay abreast with current research to understand how we can best support this population. Thus, this poster aims to explore the vast issue of Medicaid coverage via a literature review with the following three questions in mind. First, what are the effects of the gaps in Medicaid coverage as the individual prepares to re-enter their community? Second, how might Medicaid coverage influence one's employment and rate of recidivism? Third, what role might rehabilitation counselors play in this process?

11:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m.

### **Inclusive Employment in Central Europe: Career Guidance and Job Placement in Underdeveloped Systems**

*Anna Podlesna*

This presentation details the Profesia Lab initiative, a research-to-practice partnership between Michigan State University (MSU) and Alma Career Slovakia, aimed at addressing gaps in vocational rehabilitation (VR) for jobseekers with disabilities in Central Europe. Launched in 2022, the program combines the evidence-based *Assistive Soft Skills and Employment Training (ASSET)* with employer collaboration to prepare participants for competitive employment. Over two years, 208 jobseekers completed ASSET, 80 secured internships, and 18 employers engaged in structured training. Key outcomes include improved self-confidence among participants, employer training models, and plans to expand the program to the Baltics and Balkans. The initiative also focuses on validating the *Job Observation and Behavior Scale (JOBS)* tool in Slovak language to enhance job matching. Findings emphasize the role of community partnerships and cultural adaptation in VR systems lacking institutional support.

### **Self-compassion: Buffering the Impact of Disability**

*Alexandra Kriofske Mainella*

This presentation will discuss self-compassion as a construct and how vocational rehabilitation and clinical rehabilitation counselors can leverage the effects of self-compassion in their work with clients. This presentation will also present preliminary results of a study on the buffering impact of self-compassion on the experience of disability, disability impact, adjustment and coping. Implications for research and training will also be shared.

**11:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m. (continued)**

**Program Evaluation With a Capital E! Exploring the Importance and Best Practices**

*Stuart Rumrill, Bryan Austin, John Kosciulek, Chun-Lung Lee, and David G. Strauser*

Evaluation is crucial to the success of any rehabilitation employment intervention, whether it involves an hour-long social skills training session for a small group of high school students with disabilities or a multi-year, multi-million dollar nationwide project. While there are universal guiding principles in evaluation efforts, the process is highly individualized and customizable. The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign is leading the Illinois Subminimum Wage to Competitive Integrated Employment (SWTCIE) project, which aims to transition subminimum wage/14(c) workers with disabilities into competitive integrated employment (CIE). Join the SWTCIE evaluation team for an interactive discussion on the importance of evaluation, how to develop an evaluation framework and why it is essential, how to successfully align evaluation and implementation, how evaluation responsibilities and tasks can be distributed among team members, and how to translate and disseminate knowledge gained from evaluation activities.

**12:45 p.m.-1:45 p.m.**

**Advocacy through Research: Addressing Social Determinants of Health and Employment Needs for People Living with HIV**

*Jen Yung-Chen Chiu, Farbod Pour, Attia Khan, Liza Conyers, SungWon Yoon-Lee, Martha Cameron, and Deshna Nagar*

Social determinants of health (SDH) are social, economic, and political factors influencing health risks, outcomes, and access to services. Rehabilitation counselors must understand SDH to conceptualize the concerns of people with disabilities and the factors affecting their well-being. This presentation will share findings from studies on employment as an SDH for individuals living with HIV, emphasizing how SDH knowledge supports diversity, equity, and inclusion in rehabilitation counseling and education. Rehabilitation counselors often serve as advocates for individuals with disabilities and other marginalized populations. The presenter will use the American Counseling Association (ACA) Advocacy Competencies Framework to discuss advocacy work within a non-profit organization addressing SDH and promoting systemic change. The presentation will provide counselor educators and researchers with practical strategies and insights for integrating SDH into training and practice to prepare students for advocating effectively on behalf of diverse client populations.

**Making Vocational Rehabilitation Work for Individuals Living with Severe Mental Illness**

*Garrett Huck*

The purpose of this presentation is to provide attendees with an overview of the unique VR-related needs of individuals living with severe mental illnesses. Focus will be given to the unique barriers and challenges experienced by this group when seeking employment, current best practices in VR, and special nuances and strategies for consideration.

12:45 p.m.-1:45 p.m. (continued)

### **Career Adaptability of Parents of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder**

*Muharrem Koc*

(12:45-1:15)

This descriptive phenomenological study examines the career adaptability of parents of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Participants include 30 parents (18 fathers and 12 mothers; 6 were couples) ranging in age from 26 to 45 years. The semi-structured interview form developed by the researchers based on the career construction theory was used to collect data after receiving expert verification of the questions. In addition, to triangulate data sources, the Participant Feedback Form filled out by the participants on the day following the interview and the Researcher Diary filled by the interviewer during the data collection process were utilized. Colaizzi's seven-step method was followed to analyze the data. Four major domains emerged, highlighting traumas/changes in work-life after ASD, career adaptability, the influences of the COVID-19 pandemic, and post-interview awareness of this particular sample. Results from the study highlighted looking ahead, being persistent, career decision-making, career exploration accompanied by some expectations such as more time, income, and flexibility, and coping skills built upon the ASD, along with postponement and abandonment of previous career goals, alteration of future career plans, and lack of self-exploration.

### **Bias and Fairness in Assessment with Individuals with Disabilities**

*Aylin Celik-Zencir and Muharrem Koc*

(1:15-1:45)

Assessment is a vital process that needs to be conducted, focusing on different dimensions and incorporating various techniques. The impact of bias on assessment outcomes is more than just a statistical error or methodological mistake; it is a pervasive force that challenges the rehabilitation counseling profession's core principles of fairness, justice, and equality. Addressing bias in assessment necessitates a holistic strategy that includes cultural competence, ethical norms, and structural reform. It requires a commitment to challenging stereotypes, fighting for equality, and prioritizing the views and experiences of marginalized people in the assessment process. Only through such collaborative efforts will rehabilitation counselors meet their ethical commitment to offer fair, accurate, and inclusive assessments that respect the dignity and potential of all people. The APA guidelines for assessing individuals with disabilities provide practitioners valuable insight into best practices for assessing individuals with disabilities.

2:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m.

## **Facilitating Adjustment to Physical Disabilities through Gestalt Therapy in Rehabilitation Counseling**

*Gabriela Rangel*

This presentation delves into the theoretical foundations and practical applications of Gestalt therapy for enhancing emotional well-being and facilitating adjustment in individuals with physical disabilities. It emphasizes how rehabilitation counselors can empower clients to navigate the psychological challenges and barriers associated with physical disabilities by fostering acceptance, resilience, and personal empowerment. Drawing on a Gestalt therapy framework, the presentation outlines specific therapeutic techniques—such as confrontation, internal dialogue, the empty chair technique, rehearsal, and staying with the feeling—that counselors can employ to help clients build resilience and adapt to their new circumstances. Additionally, it addresses the ethical considerations that rehabilitation counselors must follow when working with this population, ensuring the provision of respectful and holistic care. Ultimately, the presentation highlights Gestalt therapy as a powerful tool in rehabilitation counseling, promoting not only emotional well-being but also effective adjustment and recovery for individuals with physical disabilities.

## **Working to Work: A Discussion of Trends, Opportunities, and Challenges of Advancing Meaningful Employment for Individuals with Severe Mental Illness**

*Josh Carpenter and Allison Levine*

Employment is a key factor in recovery and independence for individuals with Serious Mental Illness (SMI), yet unemployment remains alarmingly high in this population. This session explores barriers to sustainable employment, including stigma, low self-efficacy, and systemic limitations in vocational rehabilitation. Participants will examine career development theories, such as Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) and Hope-Centered Career Development (HCMCD), alongside evidence-based vocational models, including Individual Placement and Support (IPS) and Social Enterprises. The session highlights innovative strategies for improving job tenure, enhancing counselor training, and advocating for systemic change. Through interactive discussion and case studies, participants will gain practical tools to integrate career-focused approaches into rehabilitation counseling. By shifting from job placement to long-term career development, rehabilitation counselors can better support individuals with SMI in achieving meaningful employment and economic stability.

2:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m. (continued)

### **Invisible Challenges: Disability Acceptance, Workplace Accommodations, and Mental Health in Women with Chronic Autoimmune Conditions**

*Uzma Khan*

This presentation explores the critical relationship between disability acceptance, accommodation requests, and psychological well-being in women with chronic autoimmune conditions. Chronic autoimmune conditions often present unpredictable symptoms, leading to stigma and emotional burden. Women with these conditions face unique challenges, including the difficulty of disclosing their disabilities and requesting accommodations in both personal and professional settings. Disability acceptance has been shown to improve mental health outcomes, including lower rates of anxiety and depression, while fostering greater job satisfaction and social participation. However, many women hesitate to disclose their conditions due to fear of stigma or disbelief, which can hinder their ability to request necessary accommodations. This presentation will discuss how rehabilitation counselors can support women by promoting disability acceptance, advocating for accommodations, and enhancing psychological well-being. By exploring these interconnected factors, counselors can help women with chronic autoimmune conditions live more fulfilling and balanced lives.

3:15 p.m.-4:15 p.m.

### **Impact of First Episode Psychosis on Transition Age Youth in the Career Path**

*Eunjeong Ko*

This study examines how serious mental illness, particularly first-episode psychosis (FEP), affects the career trajectory of transition-age youth. The aim is to explore the educational and employment barriers faced by adolescents and young adults with FEP and to evaluate interventions designed to improve their career outcomes. Addressing educational and employment barriers for youth with FEP is essential for improving long-term career outcomes and independent living. Early interventions such as IPS and CSC can promote successful transitions into adulthood. This presentation will review the psychosocial barriers to career paths for transition-age youth with FEP and how rehabilitation professionals could foster greater inclusion and economic stability for young individuals with serious mental illness.

### **Challenges and Innovations: Exploring the Ethical Use of Generative AI in Vocational Rehabilitation**

*Nicole Ditchman, Bryan Austin, Amanda Boyd, and Georgianna Garrels-Rogers*

Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) platforms, such as ChatGPT, are designed to simulate human intelligence and enhance the efficiency of problem solving and content creation (Russell & Norvig, 2016; Skerritt, 2023). They hold significant potential for use across various professions, including vocational rehabilitation (VR). Yet, there are concerns, barriers and ethical considerations that pose dilemmas for the adoption of AI in VR (Alsobhi et al., 2022).

**3:15 p.m.-4:15 p.m. (continued)**

**Rehabilitation Counseling for Justice-Involved Clients: Best Practices & Strategies**

*Marissa Lockett and Melanie Poe*

Rehabilitation counseling supports justice-involved clients in reintegrating into society. This presentation addresses the unique challenges faced by individuals in the justice system, including common disabilities and mental health conditions, as well as socioeconomic and systemic barriers. Emphasizing ethical and cultural considerations, the presentation highlights ACA and CRCC guidelines, trauma-informed care, and strategies to address cultural, racial, and gender disparities. Best practices in vocational rehabilitation, such as strengths-based assessments, employment readiness programs, and leveraging assistive technology, will be discussed. Real-world case studies will illustrate successful strategies for overcoming barriers like criminal record stigma and housing challenges.

**4:15-4:30**

**Closing Remarks**



**Thank you to all presenters!**

## **2024 – 2025 ARCA Board of Directors**

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## **2023 – 2024 ARCA Office**

ARCA Office Manager: *Vickie Leeming*



# A SPECIAL *Thank You!*

Thank you to the the Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Employment and the University of Wisconsin-Madison for hosting ARCA's Pre-Conference Seminar.



Thank you to all of the Rehabilitation Counselor Education programs that have also contributed to supporting this year's ARCA Pre-Conference Seminar!