

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR & INDUSTRY  
**OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION**  
**PROGRAM GUIDELINES**

**Number:** 17-200.03

**Subject:** Psychological Services – Guidelines for  
Psychodiagnostic and Vocational Assessment

**State Board Approval:** April 19, 2017

**Description:** Outlines the use of psychological testing in the provision of  
services to OVR customers.

**Distribution:** Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Staff  
Office of Legal Counsel  
Pennsylvania State Board of Rehabilitation  
Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council  
Client Assistance Program  
Statewide Independent Living Council  
Advisory Council on the Deaf & Hard of Hearing  
Advisory Council for the Blind of Pennsylvania  
External Stakeholders

**Effective Date:** Upon receipt

**Important Changes:** Removes the three-year requirement for psychological  
testing.

**Resulting Action:** Archive Memo 10-200.02

**Inquiries:** Central Office VR Specialist for Psychological Services  
717-395-9628

Copies of this numbered memorandum are available upon request.

All materials provided, produced and published by OVR will be made available in the  
appropriate alternative format when necessary and/or upon request.

## **Use of Psychological Testing**

Prior to determining whether psychological testing should be undertaken, a careful review of the purpose and need for testing has to be considered. The OVR counselor must make this decision based upon professional judgment, the availability of existing psychological information, and the individualized circumstances of the case.

Psychological and vocational assessments are commonly used for three purposes:

- to diagnose disabilities and strengths, functional limitations, and make long- and short-range predictions based on such diagnoses for vocational success;
- to describe personality dynamics and adaptive characteristics of behavior for planning and treatment; and
- to identify particular abilities, interests, and skills as prerequisites to vocational planning.

## **Conditions Where Psychological Testing May Not Be Indicated**

Psychological and vocational assessments **\*\*may\*\*** not be indicated:

- when existing records from agencies, hospitals, clinics, schools, etc. contain either diagnostic, clinical, or vocational information of an appropriate nature;
- when resource information demonstrates a long-standing or consistent history of a disability, the nature and scope of which has remained stable over an extended period of time;
- when the individual has an established background of educational and vocational accomplishments which do not contraindicate proposed training or vocational placement; and/or
- when the individual has very recently been successfully employed and intends to return to work in the same field as soon as physical and/or mental restoration services are provided.

## **Conditions Where Psychological Testing is Most Likely Indicated**

Psychological and vocational assessments **\*\*may\*\*** be indicated:

- when the individual is suspected of having a mental, emotional, psychological, or cognitive disability which requires a diagnostic assessment by a licensed psychiatrist/psychologist in order to stabilize their condition for the successful pursuit of a vocational outcome;
- when the individual with a diagnosed disability requires specialized, individualized testing to identify strengths and functional limitations in order to set appropriate vocational goals; and/or
- when information contained in the case record on the individual's capacities, abilities, and accomplishments is lacking, ambiguous, or considered inadequate to

develop a suitable vocational goal, or the case history shows serious contradictory data in regard to the individual's capacities and abilities, and expressed vocational interests.

### **Psychological Testing Guidelines**

- Maximize the use of existing clinical and vocational reports.
- Limit psychological testing to what is necessary to arrive at diagnoses or establish a suitable vocational goal.
- Ensure that test clusters do not duplicate testing.

Authorized testing for diagnostic purposes needs to specifically request:

- diagnoses from current edition of the Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) or International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD);
- strengths;
- functional limitations;
- treatment strategies; and
- prognosis.

Authorized testing for vocational purposes needs to specifically request:

- assets;
- functional vocational limitations;
- compensatory strategies; and
- vocational choices.

Testing requirements for post-secondary accommodations need to be identified by the specific post-secondary school to which the student intends to apply.

### **Referrals**

It is suggested that referrals to vendors contain the following documentation:

- cover letter with referral questions;
- copy of OVR application;
- copy of case notes from initial interview or other case notes most relevant to the reason for testing referral; and
- narrative summary of other relevant medical/psychological/educational documentation contained within the case file with citations of the sources of information.

## **Client Assistance Program**

All programs, including community rehabilitation programs, and projects that provide services to individuals with disabilities under the Act shall advise such individuals who are applicants for or recipients of the services, or the applicants' representatives or individuals' representatives, of the availability and purposes of the client assistance program under section 112 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, including information on means of seeking assistance under such program.

## **RELATED DOCUMENTS**

**OVR-71, Psychological Services Referral Form**