



TO: ACCES-VR Staff

FROM: Debora Brown-Johnson 

DATE: January 3, 2011

SUBJECT: Substance Use Disorder Technical Assistance Brief

This is the fifth in a series of Technical Assistance Briefs that continue to be developed as relevant, practical information resources on selected topics for Adult Career and Continuing Education Services (ACCES) Vocational Rehabilitation Program (VR Program formerly known as VESID) professional staff.

The attached Technical Assistance Brief (TAB) on Substance Use Disorders (SUD) and Vocational Rehabilitation Implications is intended to:

- provide a clear, detailed description of substance use disorder as a disability;
- illuminate vocational rehabilitation practice implications for providing services, including assessment, individual plan development and placement; and
- identify specific resources related to substance use disorders.

This TAB contains concepts and practices that are essential for vocational rehabilitation counselors working with individuals with substance use disorders.

SUD is both a disease of the brain and a behavior disorder. The SUD TAB discusses the following concepts:

- recovery is possible and non linear;
- employment enhances a person's recovery;
- best practices enable counselors to assess and engage individuals at different stages of their recovery to achieve optimum vocational outcomes.

The TAB is organized in three sections:

- Part 1 – What is a Substance Use Disorder?
- Part 2 – Implications for Providing Vocational Rehabilitation Services
- Part 3 – Resources and References

Policy Section 1205.00 Alcoholism of the VR Program Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Policy manual is now obsolete and should be removed. This TAB will be posted on the ACCES-VR Policy Index web page under *Technical Assistance Briefs* at: www.acces.nysed.gov/home.html.

Note: Technical Assistance Briefs are not vocational rehabilitation policy or a prescription for services. Federal and state regulations and the policy sections of the ACCES-VR Policy Handbook contain the policies and procedures to be followed in serving all vocational rehabilitation consumers, including individuals with Substance Use Disorders.

The Technical Assistance Brief is one of the deliverables of the OASAS – ACCES-VR Statewide Work Team. Throughout the ACCES-VR and OASAS collaboration on the TAB, the Team recognized the challenges of providing quality vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with SUD. Although there were varying perspectives, every effort was made to reconcile differences and incorporate those principles and practices that will best serve individuals in recovery pursuing employment.

The Team also revised the OASAS – ACCES-VR Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), developed and piloted the Substance Use Disorder Vocational Rehabilitation Readiness Assessment form and is developing a training curriculum on the Technical Assistance Brief for ACCES staff and providers.

The OASAS ACCES-VR Statewide Work Team includes ACCES-VR, OASAS, ACCES-VR and OASAS providers and a representative from the State Rehabilitation Council:

ACCES-VR Staff - Wendy Hersh (Brooklyn), Marcia Luskin (Manhattan), Pamela Dority (Malone), Rob Davies (Syracuse), Rabb Aziz (Bronx), Sandy Silver (Garden City), Frank Coco, Mary Pontari and Donald McManus (Central Office);

OASAS Staff- Angela Lockhart and Belinda Greenfield (Downstate), William Carpenter (Upstate); and,

OASAS and ACCES-VR Providers - Nancy Luther (Northeast Career Planning, Albany), Joanne Marshal (Rochester Center for Independent Living, Rochester), Gail Begley (East House, Rochester), Robyn O'Mara (Crouse Hospital, Syracuse), Sunita Manjrekar (National Assistance on Drug Abuse Policies, New York City) and Tamar Asedo Sherman (State Rehabilitation Council, United Cerebral Palsy-Suffolk County).

We also obtained feedback from the ACCES-VR District Office Management Teams and the Vocational Rehabilitation Department at Hunter College.

We thank all those who contributed to this effort.

We anticipate that training on this Technical Assistance Brief will be initially offered to VR field staff in early 2011 and later to OASAS and Community Rehabilitation Providers. If you have any questions about this Technical Assistance Brief, please contact the VR Policy and Partnership Unit at (518) 474-1658 or by email at vrpolicy@mail.nysed.gov .

cc: Leadership Policy Team
OASAS ACCES-VR Work Team