

A Rehabilitation Counselor's Practical and Historical Guide to Earning Capacity Assessment.

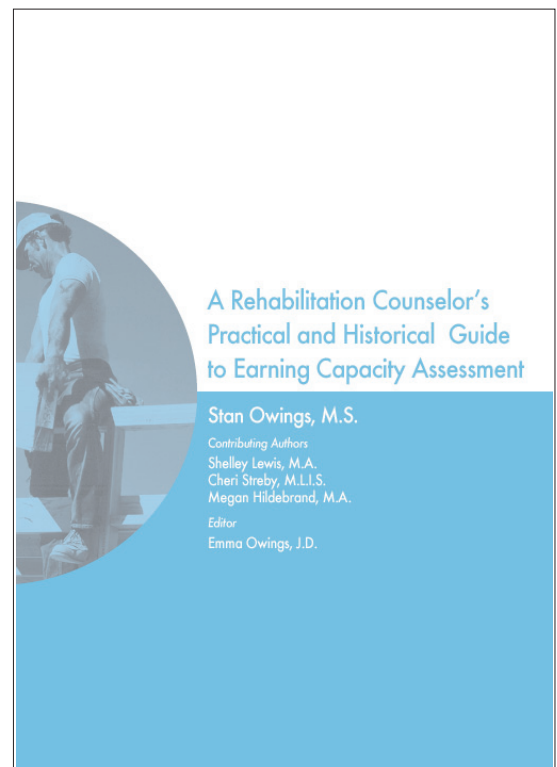
by Owings, S., Lewis, S., Streby, C., Hildebrand, M. & Owings, E. (2007).

The purpose of this concise volume by Stan Owings is to establish the rehabilitation counselor's assessment of lost earning capacity as well grounded in history and broadly accepted in the courts. This book is divided into seven sections, with Chapter 1 outlining the history of rehabilitation counseling. The evolution of rehabilitation counseling is well defined, and a cogent review of the agencies and legislation from the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 forward is included. The purpose of this discussion is to provide a foundation for the assumption that rehabilitation counseling is indeed an established profession and therefore rehabilitation counselors meet requirements of the courts that an expert be identified as a practitioner in an established profession. This legitimacy is documented by review of the programs and agencies that provide rehabilitation counseling, as well as legislation regarding the provision of rehabilitation counseling.

Professional development is the topic of the second chapter, which discusses the educational programs available to vocational counselors of today. The identification of professional organizations available for rehabilitation counselors and credentialing offered by such organizations is included. Brief reviews of nine organizations and certifying bodies, complete with the historical development of each body, are outlined. There follows a discussion of the education and curriculum typically offered for preparing professionals in the rehabilitation counseling field, including the standard phases of this process. Accreditation and credentialing is discussed and similarities throughout these processes are identified. Mr. Owings' conclusion is that a basic process applies across all venues, and standard methodologies of practice are utilized.

The third chapter includes a review of the rehabilitation counseling process and a description of that process as outlined in texts which have been prepared by professionals such as Timothy Field, Ph.D., and Roger Weed, Ph.D., among others. Methodologies used by governmental agencies such as Social Security Administration, Department of Veterans' Affairs, Office of Workers' Compensation Program, and Washington State services that include the Division for Vocational Rehabilitation, Washington State Workers' Compensation and Washington State Department of Services for the Blind are reviewed. Again, the thread of finding similarities in these various systems whereby rehabilitation counseling services are delivered is conclusively documented.

The discussion of data gathering required to perform an earnings capacity assessment is included in Chapter 4. The transference of the vocational rehabilitation process to the field of litigation, which requires expert opinions based on probability, is thoroughly discussed. A review of the literature is included here, and provides the reader with easy access to answers for those foundational questions that may arise. Comparison of the processes distinct to vocational rehabilitation counselors and economists, and including the interplay between both roles, is carefully defined. Again, the industry leaders cited here include Everett Dillman, Roger Weed, and Tim Field, among others. Mr. Owings' thorough approach to his topic is well demonstrated in the course of this chapter. The author investigates the relationships between earning capacity assessment methodologies and rehabilitation counseling processes, and concludes that the elements required in both are compatible and therefore form a basis for accepting the opinions of vocational rehabilitation counselors in this regard. An interesting discussion of vocational development theory and age earning cycle is included and offers a brisk review of both processes. A compelling argument is made that although the court's use of earning capacity assessment is a somewhat recent occurrence, the foundational processes, methodologies and points of consideration are well defined.



By Chapter 5, the author draws the threads together to create a sturdy basis for his opinion that rehabilitation counseling-based earning capacity assessment is appropriate by education, vocational development theory, and assessment of both younger and more experienced workers. Again, the argument is clearly stated that accepted methodologies exist to define this process, and therefore are accepted in the courts.

Chapter 6 treats the topic of earning capacity calculations, and provides case examples with various scenarios. The detail provided in this process demonstrates the author's familiarity and comprehension of fine details required.

The conclusion, Chapter 7, offers a summary that distinctly states a well-founded argument for acceptance in the courts of vocational rehabilitation counselors as experts in the matter of earning capacity assessment. The author ties together a review of the rehabilitation counseling process which identifies employment options to be considered for an individual, consideration of those wages, and the resulting determination of earning capacity.

Appendices A and B include the list of references and a history of rehabilitation with a chronology of legislation and key events in a tidy presentation. Appendix C provides a neatly stated chronology of the education required in the field of rehabilitation counseling and reviews professional organizations and credentialing bodies, while the final Appendix D outlines the steps required for the basic rehabilitation counseling process.

In conclusion, this publication could easily become a well-used guide for response to those qualification questions that require brief but well informed responses. Names, dates, titles, process steps, and historical overview are all available in this publication.

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