

ACVREP NEWSLETTER – JANUARY 30, 2006

ACVREP – The Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals

Table of Contents:

1. ACVREP Welcomes New Administrative Assistant, Juliet Bresler.
2. CMS Demonstration Projects Back On Track.
3. ACVREP Board of Directors Approves Changes To Vision Rehabilitation Therapy's Eligibility Criteria For Category 3 Applicants.
4. PCO Receives Grant For Project Titled "Access and Inclusion: Our Rehabilitation Future."
5. Blind Rehabilitation Specialist (O&M Instructor) Job Opening – Birmingham, Alabama.
6. Blind Rehabilitation Specialist (Living Skills Instructor) Job Opening – West Haven, Connecticut.
7. Blind Rehabilitation Specialist (Orientation & Mobility Instructor) Job Opening – West Haven, Connecticut.
8. Apprentice Instructor Job Opening - Rochester, Michigan.
9. P-12 School Principal Job Opening – Great Falls, Montana.
10. Low Vision Therapist Job Opening – Concord, New Hampshire.
11. Quote of The Day!

ACVREP Welcomes New Administrative Assistant, Juliet Bresler

Juliet, a native of Edinburgh, Scotland, comes to us with a strong background in web site design and development, as well as bookkeeping and administrative duties. She has a dual Bachelor's degree in English and Clinical Psychology from New York University, and has successfully run her own web design firm for six and a half years. She has been married to a "lovely American bloke" for almost 5 years, and is Momma to daughter Hannah, 6 years old, and son Kieran, 3 years old. In her free time, (Free time? What's that?), she enjoys reading, watching movies, listening to music (ask her about her obsession with Sting), and drawing and painting – quite often all at the same time! Juliet is available for questions, answers, and offers of chocolate and peanut butter ice cream by calling our office at 520-887-6816, or by email at jbresler@acvrep.org.

Note: Lisa Worden is no longer employed with ACVREP. Juliet is Lisa's replacement. Please welcome Juliet when you get a minute. We're lucky to have her!

CMS Demonstration Project Back On Track

As some of you may already know, the CMS (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services) demonstration project is back on again! This is great news for our vision rehabilitation and education professionals! The project is slated to begin April 1, 2006. The sites that were selected for the project include two cities (New York City, NY and Atlanta, GA) and four states (New Hampshire, Washington, North Carolina, and Kansas). In addition, Medicare reimbursement for services was increased from six to nine hours. We will forward additional information as we receive it.

ACVREP Board Of Directors Approves Changes To Vision Rehabilitation Therapy's Eligibility Criteria For Category 3 Applicants

The Vision Rehabilitation Therapy (VRT) Committee is pleased to announce the new revisions for Category 3. Historically, the intent of Category 3 was to (1) enable the agency trained VRT professionals, with experience in VRT, the opportunity to become certified based on experience, and (2) enable professionals with similar educational degrees the opportunity for certification based on relevant formal education and employment experience. Although, occasionally, we receive applications from these two areas, the majority of the applicants are now coming from varied experience, education, and employment backgrounds. Because quality standards are a priority, and our mandate is to establish a minimum standard of both academic and skills training that we would be able to support, the VRT Committee has revised Category 3 in order to clarify objectives necessary for taking the certification examination. We have significantly increased the number of hours of experience for our Category 3 applicants as this will help to ensure the standard of care that we need professionally.

In the past, Category 3 applicants had to possess at least a Bachelor's degree (or foreign equivalent, as verified through an independent credential evaluation company) in any field, submit documentation attesting to their knowledge in the required 15 core domain areas, and complete a 350 hour internship under a Certified Vision Rehabilitation Therapist (CVRT).

At their October 2005 meeting, the ACVREP Board of Directors discussed Category 3 and approved the following changes:

1. The Body of Knowledge (found in the VRT certification handbook) and 15 core domain areas were condensed into one document, titled "Body of Knowledge Core Domain Areas." As a result, there are now the following 16 core domain areas.
 1. Knowledge of the Blindness System.*
 2. Medical Aspects of Blindness and Low Vision.*
 3. Professionalism and Practice Methods.*
 4. Personal Management.*
 5. Home Management.*
 6. Communication Systems.*
 7. Braille and Other Tactual Systems.*
 8. Adaptive Computer Technology.*
 9. Recreation and Leisure.*
 10. Aging and Vision Loss.*
 11. Deaf-Blindness.
 12. Teaching and Learning Strategies.
 13. Psychosocial Aspects of Blindness and Vision Loss.
 14. Individuals who are Blind or Visually Impaired with Additional Disabilities.
 15. Research.
 16. Orientation and Mobility.
2. **Of the new 16 Body of Knowledge Core Domain Areas listed above, the first ten (#1 - #10, with an * following each area), which are considered VRT specific core domain areas, must be met through formal education (university/college coursework) or ACVREP approved CE programs.** Documentation would include official transcripts or a Certificate of Completion/Attendance.
3. For the last six non-VRT specific core domain body of knowledge areas listed above (#11-#16), applicants can demonstrate knowledge through formal education, ACVREP approved CE programs or other

activities. Examples of documentation include course descriptions or course syllabi, certificates of completion/attendance, continuing education (CE) hour information, continuing education unit (CEU) information, etc. Documentation must be provided to verify course content.

4. **Applicants must now successfully complete at least a 1,000 hour “discipline specific, supervised practice (internship) that includes, but is not limited to, direct service hours, and related phone calls, meetings, observations, report writing, etc.”** The practice must be supervised by a Certified Vision Rehabilitation Therapist (CVRT), whether the internship is on-site or off-site.

The following items remain the same:

1. The applicant must still submit official transcripts documenting at least a Bachelor’s degree (or foreign equivalent, as verified through an independent credential evaluation company) in any field.
2. The applicant must still submit a “*Clinical Performance Evaluation*” form completed by the CVRT practice supervisor at the end of the internship.
3. The applicant must still sign a written statement agreeing to uphold high ethical and professional standards (found on the second page of the VRT Eligibility Application).
4. Once determined eligible to sit for the exam, the applicant must still pass the VRT written exam demonstrating knowledge of VRT principles and applications.
5. Once the applicant has passed the VRT exam, s/he must then apply to and be approved by the ACVREP Board of Directors for certification for a five year period.

Should you have any questions regarding the above changes, please contact Sharon L. Mikrut at 520-887-6816 or smikrut@acvrep.org.

PLEASE NOTE: The new VRT Eligibility Application and VRT Certification Handbook, reflecting these changes, will be posted to the ACVREP website mid-February.

PCO Receives Grant For Project Titled “Access and Inclusion: Our Rehabilitation Future”

The Pennsylvania College of Optometry (PCO), Institute for the Visually Impaired, Department of Graduate Studies in Vision Impairment, has been awarded a five-year, \$500,000 grant from the U. S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS), for the project entitled “Access and Inclusion: Our Rehabilitation Future.” **This project will address critical shortages of university-trained personnel in Orientation and Mobility (O&M) and Vision Rehabilitation Therapy (VRT) by increasing the supply of trained O&M and VRT graduates and upgrading existing personnel in the State-Federal Rehabilitation System.**

The project objectives are as follows:

1. Prepare students and state agency personnel for certification in O&M, VRT, and combined O&M/VRT via degree and certificate programs;
2. Develop an Access Advisory Committee to ensure that all components of the O&M and VRT curricula are accessible to all learners;
3. Create two accessible compact disks that emphasize observational techniques applicable to learners with disabilities, including those who are blind or visually impaired;

4. Develop training courses for faculty, adjunct faculty and on-site fieldwork and internship supervisors that address course accessibility issues and non-visual O&M techniques; and
5. Disseminate all project materials through structured outreach, demonstration and training efforts.

The full time O&M Master's program is offered as an on-campus program, combining in-person and on-line course work over three terms followed by a full time internship during the fourth term. The part-time VRT Master's and certificate programs are offered online, with on-campus attendance required during one intensive Summer Institute for all methodology and hands-on coursework. For students earning the VRT Master's degree, an O&M certificate program is also available.

All academic programs offered through the Access and Inclusion project reflect rigorous competency-based curricula, approved by the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) and accredited by the Commission on Higher Education, Middle States Association.

Maureen A. Duffy, M.S., CVRT, Laurel Leigh, M.S., COMS, and Audrey J. Smith, Ph.D., will assume responsibility for the Access and Inclusion project. Co-Directors Ms. Leigh and Ms. Duffy will share responsibility for overall leadership and management, while Dr. Smith will provide fiscal oversight.

According to Ms. Duffy and Ms. Leigh, "We are especially pleased with the opportunity that this grant provides to develop instructional methods and materials that emphasize non-visual observation techniques. Mastery of observational techniques is generally acknowledged as a critical component of general teacher training and professional practice. Historically, there has been a dearth of research in the most effective methodologies for developing these skills by and with blind and visually impaired O&M/VRT students in the university setting. Further development of this subject area will broaden our faculty's skills in developing alternative approaches to O&M and VRT instruction and better prepare them to train potential O&M and VRT students who are blind and visually impaired."

Through this grant, the Department of Graduate Studies in Vision Impairment is able to offer scholarships to qualified applicants. Application deadlines for the 2006-2007 academic years are as follows:

- February 28, 2006 for Summer 2006 semester
- May 28, 2006 for Fall 2006 semester

For further information about the VRT program, contact Maureen A. Duffy at mduffy@pco.edu or 215-780-1362.

For further information about the O&M program, contact Laurel Leigh at lleigh@pco.edu or 215-780-1449.

Blind Rehabilitation Specialist (O&M Instructor) Job Opening – Birmingham, Alabama

The VA Medical Center in Birmingham, AL has a full time, permanent position open for a Blind Rehabilitation Specialist (O&M Instructor). The open period is 1/26/06 – 2/9/06, the series/grade is GS-0601-09/11, and the salary range is \$42,955.00 – \$67,567.00 USD per year. Salary is dependent upon qualifying grade. Up to a \$5,000 recruitment/relocation bonus is available for a highly qualified candidate. The person in this position is responsible for the complete O&M program of blinded veterans assigned. Key requirements include U.S. Citizenship and specific educational requirements. For

additional information, contact Rick Hilner, COMS, at 205-933-8101, ext. 5126/6996 or go to www.usajobs.gov.

Blind Rehabilitation Specialist (Living Skills Instructor) Job Opening – West Haven, Connecticut

The VA Connecticut Healthcare System (950 Campbell Avenue, West Haven, CT, 06516) has a job opening for a Blind Rehabilitation Specialist (Living Skills Instructor). For additional information, contact Marianne Dubois, ext. 2347, or Pauline McKee, ext. 3804 at 203-932-5711.

Blind Rehabilitation Specialist (Orientation & Mobility Instructor) Job Opening – West Haven, Connecticut

The VA Connecticut Healthcare System (950 Campbell Avenue, West Haven, CT, 06516) has a job opening for a Blind Rehabilitation Specialist (Orientation & Mobility Instructor). For additional information, contact Marianne Dubois, ext. 2347, or Pauline McKee, ext. 3804 at 203-932-5711.

Apprentice Instructor Job Opening - Rochester, Michigan

Leader Dogs for the Blind, located in Rochester, MI, was founded in 1939 with the vision to enhance the lives of individuals who are blind or visually impaired. Today, Leader Dogs for the Blind is proud to have assisted over 12,500 people in achieving the freedom of safe and independent travel. Graduating approximately 300 teams a year, the school serves individuals from all areas of the globe.

We currently have an opening for a full time apprentice instructor for our specialized deaf/blind team. This position is responsible for training dogs to be qualified Leader Dog guides and also for instructing qualified persons, who are both deaf and legally blind, to travel effectively with those dogs to enhance their mobility. Apprentice Instructors complete a three level training program to become certified dog guide instructors. This position requires a Bachelor's Degree (BA or BS) from an accredited four-year college or university and a minimum of one year of related experience. An equivalent combination of experience and education maybe considered. Applicants must have fluency in American Sign Language (ASL). Previous experience and knowledge of animal behavior, dog training skills, teaching skills, and experience with Orientation and Mobility strongly desired.

Leader Dogs for the Blind has competitive salary offerings and excellent benefits that include medical, dental, 401K and life insurance. We also offer good quality of life benefits such as paid vacation, personal and holiday time as well as flexible schedules. Please send cover letter and resume to humanresources@leaderdog.org or mail to Leader Dogs for the Blind, Attention: Human Resources, PO Box 5000, Rochester, MI, 48308.

P-12 School Principal Job Opening – Great Falls, Montana

The Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind (MSDB) is a residential and day school which provides educational opportunities for students, preschool through high school, at our Great Falls campus. MSDB is also a statewide resource center providing information and technical support through our Outreach Program to students attending school in their local districts. The campus-based education program serves an average enrollment of 75 students from preschool through the 12th grade. Through the Outreach Program, the school's nine consultants provide technical assistance to the parents and teachers of over 300

students in more than 90 school districts across the state. The Family Advisor Program supports in-home, early intervention programming to an average of twenty families each year.

MSDB remains dedicated to preserving this proud tradition by continually improving the quality of the educational opportunities it provides students, their families, and the state.

Under the general direction of the Superintendent, the School Principal is responsible for the supervision, evaluation, and planning of activities connected with the school's educational programs in the departments for the deaf and the blind, as well as outreach services.

As the instructional leader for the school, the principal is responsible for creating an environment conducive to teaching and learning, supervision of all staff (62) in the education program, and planning and development of the school's continuous improvement process. The principal must demonstrate working knowledge of contemporary curriculum and instructional practices unique to the educational needs of students who are deaf and blind and of special education rules and regulations.

The principal must be able to develop and maintain the respect and trust of the staff, students, and parents, and communicate effectively with staff, students, parents, and constituents, including those who are visually impaired, deaf or hard-of-hearing. The principal must be fluent in sign language.

Minimum Requirements:

1. Bachelor's or Master's degree in Deaf Education or Blind Education.
2. Eligible for Class 3 administration license with principal endorsement at the elementary or secondary level or the ability to achieve licensure credentials within three years of date of hire.
3. Five years successful experience as a teacher and administrator in programs serving individuals who are deaf or blind, with at least three years as a classroom teacher.
4. Working knowledge of the unique curricular and instructional needs of students who are deaf and blind, to be acquired within three years of date of hire.
5. Fluent in sign language.

Preferred Requirements:

1. Experience working with students who are deaf or blind.
2. Experience working at a residential school.
3. Experience working with students who have additional disabilities.
4. Experience managing the special education process.

While performing the duties of this job, the employee is regularly required to stand, walk, and sit. The employee is occasionally required to operate word processing software that requires repetitive motion of hands and arms, reach with hands and arms, stoop, kneel, or run. The employee must occasionally lift and/or move up to 50 pounds. The work environment consists of an 18 acre campus with 4 buildings housing the education program and 3 buildings housing the residential program. This position requires frequent and independent travel between all buildings. The physical demands and work environment characteristics described are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job. Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

The salary range is \$55,000 - \$65,000 and the position number is 51300302. There is a full State Employee Benefits Package.

Required application materials:

1. Signed and completed State of Montana Employment Application (PD-25). Portions of the application may be photocopied if legible.
2. Application supplement.
3. Letter of application, resume or vita and transcript(s) showing degree(s) earned.
4. Contact information for three (3) professional references.
5. Copy of current teacher/administrator licensure and areas of endorsement.
6. Applicants claiming the Handicapped Person's Employment Preference must provide verification of eligibility with the application materials by the closing date. The required documentation includes a completed Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) Certification of Disability form.
7. Signed and dated Applicant Release of Information form.

Selection procedures to be used in evaluating the applicant's qualifications include an evaluation of the Montana State Application form, application supplement, interview(s), and reference checks.

For inquiries and requests for an application packet, contact:

Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind
3911 Central Avenue, Great Falls, Montana 59405
1-800-882-6732 (Voice/TTD)
Accessed electronically at www.msdb.mt.gov

or any Montana Job Service Workforce Center
Locally 1018 7th Street South,
Great Falls, Montana 59405
406-791-5800 (V, TDD)

Applications will be accepted until 5:00 PM February 10, 2006. Applications may be returned to the Montana School for the Deaf and the Blind or Great Falls Job Service Workforce Center

Low Vision Therapist Job Opening – Concord, New Hampshire

The New Hampshire Association for the Blind is adding to its team of low vision service providers. It has an opening for a Low Vision Therapist to be based out of its headquarters in Concord, NH. The ideal candidate for this position would either be a Certified Low Vision Therapist or a person who possesses a Bachelor's degree and is a Certified Ophthalmic Medical Technologist (COMT), Certified Ophthalmic Technician (COT) **or** Certified Ophthalmic Assistant (COA), with a minimum of three years of experience in vision rehabilitation program or in eye care practice. Willingness to become certified as a low vision therapist through ACVREP is required. Forward cover letter and resume to G. W. Woodland, VP for Rehabilitation/Education, NH Association for the Blind, 25 Walker St., Concord, NH, 03301 or e-mail to gwoodland@sightcenter.com.

Quote Of The Day!

“Let your tongue speak what your heart thinks.” – Davy Crockett