

Building Capacity to Work

Authors - Anecke van Staden, Claire Barton.

Individuals referred to the Vocational Goals Programme have usually expressed an interest in returning to work, but do not feel ready to start job searching. Clients usually come to the programme with a vague idea about what they would be interested in doing, but with little or no knowledge as to how to go about setting or reaching clear vocational goals.

The 12 week Vocational Goals Programme includes the following:

Week 1	Introductions and Welcome. Defining 'Meaningful Vocational Activity' Starting Curriculum Vitae
Week 2	Goals and Aspirations Continue draft Curriculum Vitae
Week 3	Confidence in the workplace Continue draft Curriculum Vitae
Week 4	Disability Employment Advisor – Pathways to work
Week 5	Disability Discrimination Act Disclosure of Disability and Reasonable Adjustments Social inclusion/ Diversity and equality in the workplace.
Week 6	Health and safety at work
Week 7	Rights, responsibilities and respect in the workplace
Week 8	How will benefits be affected by vocational goals. Pathways to work. Signposting for further advice.
Week 9	Job adverts, job descriptions and person specifications. How to present yourself on application forms. Completion of Curriculum Vitae
Week 10	Interview skills – presentation and communication
Week 11	Assertiveness in the workplace
Week 12	Visit the Community Volunteer Services and Job Centre and library

Group sessions are structured according to the guidelines of intervention as set out in the Model of Creative Ability for the levels of Passive Participation and Imitative Participation.

These guidelines are on:

1. Choice of activity:

- work related
- follow a procedure
- predictable end product
- require planning
- improves the work competency skills of the client

Application in the Vocational Goals Programme
Choosing product centered activities such as:

- writing their Curriculum Vitae (CV),
- filling out application forms
- preparing for and participating in interview role-plays.

2. Presentation of Activity:

- Clear, simple instructions of the task as a whole and the smaller components and steps
- Regular supervision and feedback
- Clients are encouraged to start evaluating their own products and responses.

Application to the Vocational Goals programme:

An example of a CV is discussed in the first session to clearly explain the norms and expectations before clients start working on their own. Throughout the programme they are given feedback about the aspects already completed and supported to continue working on the draft.

3. Structuring of the session:

- Appropriate community settings
- Fixed routine
- Own work areas

Application to the Vocational Goals programme

The group programme takes place once a week over a twelve week period in a setting appropriate for work related activities such as libraries and rented rooms in office buildings. When appropriate group members work on computers at the library, creating their individual work setting.

4. Handling Principles:

- Clients are supported in the execution of tasks
- Positive feedback
- Facilitators model appropriate behaviour throughout

Application to the Vocational Goals programme:

In the programme, clients are given clear expectations and support in achieving these through clear and appropriate feedback which is specific to their achievements. Through this the client is empowered to approach work environment with a better understanding of the expectations thereof and more confidence in their ability to manage this.

The clients' handling of the group sessions is observed by the OT and she responds according to the principles given by the Model of Creative Ability. As this ensures a 'just right challenge', it facilitates growth in the client's abilities and impacts on the clients functioning in the group. The clients therefore are supported in setting realistic and personal goals with regards to their vocational activities.

At the end of the programme, this in-depth knowledge about the client and their vocational goals allows the OT to give recommendations to

- the client
- care coordinator
- Employment specialist.

Recommendations include information on:

- appropriate structuring of the client's work environment,
- the support and supervision the client is likely to need from colleagues and managers
- the type of tasks the individual is likely to be able to execute comfortably and confidently

This ultimately supports the client to obtain and sustain appropriate employment.

References:
DE WITT, P. (2007) Creative Ability: a model for psychological occupational therapy. IN ALERS, V. ; CROUCH, R. (Eds.) Occupational Therapy in Psychiatry and Mental Health. 4th ed. London: Whurr Publishers. DU TOIT, H.J.V. (2004) Patient Volition and Action in Occupational Therapy.3rd ed. Pretoria: Vona & Marié du Toit Foundation.