

## **Community Rehabilitation Practitioner (CRP) Online Training**

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### **Abstract**

PEPNet-Midwest and the University of Wisconsin-Stout Vocational Rehabilitation Institute collaborated to create two online courses with the goal of increasing vocational rehabilitation professionals' abilities to provide services to individuals who are D/deaf or hard of hearing. The first course "Working with Individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing" includes units on Deaf Culture and Language, Working with Sign Language Interpreters, and Assistive Listening Devices. "Vocational Services for Individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing" is a more advanced course focused toward rehabilitation professionals. Units include Employment Services, Psychometric Testing, and Vocational Evaluation. Participant feedback has been overwhelmingly positive and the courses will continue to be offered at least biannually.



PEPNet-Midwest and the University of Wisconsin-Stout Vocational Rehabilitation Institute collaborated to create two online courses with the goal of increasing vocational rehabilitation professionals' abilities to provide services to individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. The first course "Working with Individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing" is introductory and focuses on communication and culture aspects. "Vocational Services for Individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing" is a more advanced course recommended for participants who have some background in psychometric testing. Each course consists of three units which are based on content presented in videos by subject matter experts.

### **Working with Individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing**

The three units in this course include Deaf Culture and Language, Working with Sign Language Interpreters, and Assistive Listening Devices.

*Deaf Culture and Language* is presented in ASL by Doug Bahl, who is an Interpreter Training Instructor at St. Paul College. Specific topics include salient characteristics of Deaf culture, individual differences among people who are Deaf, and the various communication methods -ASL, contact sign, English, the Rochester Method, Total Communication, Manually Coded English, and Cued Speech.

*Working with Sign Language Interpreters* is presented by Diane Currie Richardson, who has been working with individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing for the past 35 years as a teacher,

interpreter, interpreter trainer, social worker, and an occupational communication specialist. Topics discussed include terminology, why interpreters are needed, the interpreter's code of conduct, why good signers are not a replacement for an interpreter, how to hire an interpreter, and tips on working with an interpreter.

*Assistive Listening Devices* is presented by Cheryl Davis, who is the Director of the Regional Resource Center on Deafness at Western Oregon University. Dr. Davis discusses the impact of hearing loss on access to oral/aural communication, hearing aids and cochlear implants, transmitter and receiver systems (personal amplifiers, FM, induction, infrared), listening options (headphones, neck loops, etc.), and ALD peripherals.

### **Vocational Services for Individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing**

This course includes three units focused on providing vocational rehabilitation or assessment services to individuals who are d/Deaf or hard of hearing: Employment Services, Psychometric Testing, and Vocational Evaluation.

*Employment Services* is presented in ASL by Elise Knopf, the director of PEPNet-Midwest. Previously, she served as program coordinator for the Minnesota Employment Center for people who are deaf and hard of hearing in St. Paul. Specific topics include job seeking skills, employment training, vocational placement, occupational communication specialists, supported employment, accessibility, and common acronyms/vocabulary.

*Psychometric Testing* is presented by Kathleen Deery, who is an Associate Professor in the Department of Rehabilitation and Counseling at the University of Wisconsin-Stout. Dr. Deery received her master's degree from Gallaudet University, conducted research at a NIDRR funded Research and Training Center on Traditionally Underserved Persons who are Deaf, performed psychological and neuropsychological assessments of individuals with disabilities, and served as a state vocational rehabilitation counselor specializing in services to people who are deaf and deaf-blind. Topics include testing basics; pre-test preparation (with participant and interpreter); concerns during the testing process, including use of interpreters; tests commonly used with people who are Deaf or hard of hearing; and what occurs after testing is completed.

*Vocational Evaluation* is presented by Michelle Hamilton, who is an Associate Professor and the Graduate Program Director of the Department of Rehabilitation and Counseling at the University of Wisconsin-Stout. Dr. Hamilton is also the Vocational Evaluation and Career Assessment Professionals (VECAP) standards coordinator and representative to the Commission on Certification of Work Adjustment and Vocational Assessment Professionals (CCWAVES). Topics in this presentation include background on vocational evaluation, lab-based vs. situational vs. community assessments for people who are Deaf or hard of hearing, interest assessment, and specific tips for evaluating this population.

### **Who Should Take the Courses?**

The courses are primarily aimed toward vocational rehabilitation professionals, but individuals from many other fields may be interested, particularly in the first course "Working with Individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing." There have been many interpreters who took the first course and have found it beneficial. Assistive/rehabilitation technologists would particularly benefit from the course since a focus is on assistive listening devices. Medical professionals such as occupational and physical therapists as well as nurses would benefit from additional knowledge on Deaf culture and nearly anyone who works with individuals who use interpreters would benefit from the specific unit on that topic. In addition, regular and special educators and university disability services advisors would find the course content relevant.

The course "Vocational Services for Individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing" is most applicable to vocational rehabilitation practitioners such as public and private rehabilitation counselors and vocational evaluators. This course could also be helpful for interpreters, particularly those employed in rehabilitation agencies. Parent-advocates may find it beneficial to learn about the range of services available to their children who are deaf or hard of hearing. Activities in the courses can be tailored to individual situations to result in relevancy for learners from different backgrounds.

### **What is Involved?**

The courses are offered entirely online through the Desire to Learn (D2L) course management system. Each unit consists of a pre-test; an introduction; the content, which is presented in video format; a post-test; and activities. Many of the activities involve researching different topics and reporting on them or applying material learned in the content to their job or a case study. Responses to assignments are often posted on a discussion board, which allows participants to read and respond to each others' messages. This interaction is actually a requirement of the course to allow participants to learn from each other.

All activities and content are "asynchronous" so participants can work on the course whenever it is convenient for them, as long as they complete by the due dates. The first unit is due two weeks after the course starts with one unit due weekly after that. Having due dates helps keep participants on track since time management can be a problem with online learning. Some flexibility is allowed when necessary. Each course is offered over a five-week period of time. They have typically been offered sequentially with a week in between, each spring and fall. The courses will likely continue to be offered biannually until registration starts to decrease.

The courses are professional development and offered for continuing education units (CEUs). They are pre-approved for Certified Rehabilitation Counselors (CRC) and RID/NAD certificants can receive pre-approval for them through PINRA. Each course takes participants approximately 10 hours to complete. Participants receive 10 clock hours CEU. Two of the 10 hours are pre-approved for CRC ethics credits.

### **What Kind of Support is Available?**

These courses feature a course facilitator who facilitates the process of learning online. The role of the facilitator is to monitor this process and intervene as necessary to provide encouragement, clarity, or redirection. Currently Heidi Adams from PEPNet-Midwest is our primary facilitator.

In addition to the facilitator, participants will get to know the training coordinator at UWStout, April Pierson. The training coordinator is the first person of contact and ensures that participants are able to access the course adequately. The facilitator is the primary contact person during the course, but the training coordinator monitors the course, adds comments and feedback occasionally, and incorporates feedback from each offering of the course to improve it for the next time.

### **Feedback**

Feedback on the courses has been very positive. Following are comments from participants who have taken these courses:

*Participant 1: This was a great course. When I signed up for it, I was wondering if I should be... because I work with the Deaf and Hard of Hearing every day and have for many*

*years. I was hoping I would learn some new things and wow did I ever! I really enjoyed all of the sections.*

*Participant 2: I so empathize with everyone who expressed a concern about an 'on-line' course. I am technologically challenged, but found it fairly easy to navigate.*

*Participant 3: This has been an interesting and workable method of learning, and the discussion comments changed the online option to a more social one. Yes, very good information and presented in a nice variety. I'd definitely recommend it, and already have three other interpreters who are interested in the course.*

*Participant 4: Coming into the course I thought I had a fairly good understanding of working with individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing. I must say, I really did learn a lot. I enjoyed the video presentations.*

*Participant 5: I enjoyed this course very much. I learned a lot of information that I believe will assist me in more effectively serving my customers who are Deaf and/or Hard of Hearing. I feel much more organized in information that I can present as available options.*

*Participant 6: I have absolutely enjoyed this course. I found the information and activities very beneficial. I would recommend this class to anyone who works with Deaf/HOH at any capacity. I found the PowerPoint very useful and the transcripts as reinforcement for each lesson. I would be very interested in any other courses available through this medium.*