

STUDENT CHAPTER HANDBOOK

of the



Introduction

In its on-going effort to provide guidance and support to the profession of rehabilitation counseling, the National Rehabilitation Counseling Association (NRCA) is pleased to provide this organizational guide for developing and maintaining student chapters of the NRCA and/or NRCA State Chapters. Although this manual does provide specific guidelines, each student chapter should be flexible in meeting the unique needs of the university and student populations.

Special thanks to NRCA members who have contributed to earlier versions of this Handbook.

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Goals and objectives of the NRCA

The purpose of the National Rehabilitation Counselors Association is to advance the profession of rehabilitation counseling through the establishment of professional ethics and the promotion of public understanding and supportive programs, which assist all persons with disabilities in becoming self-sufficient and contributing members of society.

To accomplish these goals, the Board and membership of this Association dedicate their professional activities to the realization of the following objectives:

I Increasing public understanding of the role of rehabilitation counseling in assisting all persons with disabilities to become to the extent possible, self-sufficient, self-supporting and contributing members of society.

II Promoting and encouraging the development of professional training opportunities for all persons engaged in the counseling of persons with disabilities.

III Developing professional standards for rehabilitation counseling including the opportunity to participate in certification and the certification maintenance process. Only graduate preparation, as established by the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC), and the Commission on Rehabilitation Education (CORE), for entry into the profession of rehabilitation counseling is recognized.

IV Providing a forum for the discussion of rehabilitation counseling.

V Encouraging the development of rehabilitation counseling as it contributes to an interdisciplinary approach to the solution of problems in rehabilitation.

VI Fostering research to advance knowledge and skills in rehabilitation counseling.

VII Establishing standards of performance for individuals representing NRCA with other organizations. Accountability for responsible representation must be assured.

VIII Working with employers of rehabilitation counselors and set the stage for developing relationships that will be beneficial to all.

Eligibility for student membership

To be eligible for membership as a student, an applicant must be of high moral character and dedicated to the advancement of helping persons with disabilities. Student members shall be enrolled full- or part-time in an accredited institution in a curriculum leading to at least a Bachelors degree in Rehabilitation Services, a Masters degree in Rehabilitation Counseling, or a Doctoral degree in Rehabilitation Counseling, Rehabilitation Psychology, or related fields.

Student Chapters

The student chapter is a body of individuals at the student level committed to furthering the goals of the profession and the National Rehabilitation Counseling Association. The student chapter functions as an initiation into the profession of Rehabilitation Counseling by providing students with information on the growth of the profession, a forum for discussion of current issues, an opportunity to put ideas into action, and to establish indispensable networks with other rehabilitation professionals.

The relationship between Student and Local or State Chapters

Professional competency is a developmental process that includes specific knowledge and behaviors. In order for a profession to grow, practitioners and academicians have an obligation to guide and support those developmental activities. When we look into the heart of successful associations, the power and effectiveness of a mentoring relationship between the wisdom of experience and the idealism of the novice becomes apparent.

The relationship between Student and Local or State Chapters of the NRCA reflect a model of mentorship that requires ongoing and consistent interaction. State or local chapters provide guidance to their student members on a number of levels.

- Provide the basic organizational structure, based upon the NRCA, which serves to enhance and promote professional communication and interaction.
- Include a Student Representative on the State or Local Chapter Board of Directors.
- Encourage students from each university with an undergraduate rehabilitation or graduate rehabilitation counseling program to attend board and membership meetings.
- Develop an individual mentorship program (a mentor program model is provided in Appendix B.)
- Develop a student scholarship award to promote and validate the academic experiences of student members.
- Appoint a Local or State Board liaison to the Student Chapter. This liaison can make suggestions to the students on how to become involved in the activities of the State or local Chapter.
- Organize practicing rehabilitation professionals to participate in the academic programs from which their future colleagues will graduate.

This list is not all-inclusive. The role of the interaction between student and practitioner is to promote academic and professional experiences and to stimulate the future growth of each.

Depending on the size of the rehabilitation/rehabilitation counseling program, some student programs may find it more efficient to belong to a local chapter and combine student-local chapter activities.

Student Chapter Advisor/Committee

Most student chapters will benefit from a faculty advisor, an Advisory Committee, or a liaison with a member of an NRCA State Chapter. Because most students only remain in program for 2-3 years, it is essential that a faculty advisor assist in providing continuity from year to year. The faculty member can share with students, which activities have and have not been successful in the past.

Doctoral student in the Rehabilitation Counselor Education Program

For programs that have doctoral students, the doctoral student can provide the student chapter with technical assistance and organizational expertise about the University and community. The doctoral student should know which organizations on campus fund graduate student activities and ideally would be a member of the graduate student organization on campus.

Members of the State or Local Chapter

A board member of the state or local chapter of NRCA can provide the student chapter with professional experience and provide an important link to the professional organization and its activities.

Members of consumer groups, organizations, Centers for Independent Living

A member of a consumer organization can help the student chapter identify advocacy activities that may be consistent with the mission of the student organization. This individual can provide an important link to consumer groups and activities.

Establishing a Student Chapter

NRCA Guidelines for Campus Chapter Affiliations

The establishment of a Student Chapter, subsumed within parameters governing establishing Local Chapters, is delineated within Article XII, Section 3 of the NRCA Bylaws. The following list reflects the basic tenants for starting a local chapter.

Sec. 3 Procedures for Developing State or Local Chapters: A group of members wishing to be approved as a State or Local Chapter shall:

- A. Submit written by-laws for approval by the NRCA Board (See Appendix B for sample by-laws)
- B. Define the geographical or other boundary of the state or local chapter.

Article XIV Reporting Procedures. Each Regional, State and Local Chapter shall submit to the NRCA an annual report covering the activities of the Chapter for the preceding year and a financial report.

This report is due to the NRCA office no later than January 31.

The Role of a Steering Committee

Establishment of a student chapter begins with an orientation. The orientation of interested students takes place to discuss who will be asked to be an advisor, outlining the steps to become a registered student organization on campus and to begin to build enthusiasm for the Student Chapter. The orientation can include assigning responsibility for contacting NRCA for organizational materials.

The Steering Committee

sets up pro tem officers for President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer.

is also responsible for planning initial general meetings.

Sample Organizational Activities

Recruitment

The following schedule is recommended for recruitment of new students:

Summer: The existing executive board should send a letter to the new students welcoming them to the program and expressing a desire to help them make sense of and become involved in the program.

Fall Orientation: If there is any orientation the Student Rehabilitation Counseling Association should be there to extend an invitation to new students and to encourage current students to be involved.

Announcements should be made at the beginning of each semester regarding SRCA and the time and date for the first general meeting.

§ The executive board should make a brief announcement during all first year classes.

§ It is wise for SRCA to enlist the support of their professors.

Meetings

Meetings should include an agenda with planned activities, old business, new business and an update of state and national activities. Attendance records and minutes should be kept.

The first or second meeting of the year should include election of officers. If students will be involved with a program for more than two years, the chapter may wish to facilitate continuity by having officers in training their first year take over their second year.

At the first meeting, students should discuss possible activities. (See Appendix C – Common Problems with Activities)

SAMPLE

STUDENT CHAPTER BY-LAWS



DEFINITIONS

- (A) The Student Rehabilitation Association (S.R.C.A.) shall mean the association of students in the Rehabilitation/Rehabilitation Counseling Program at a University.
- (B) "Member" shall mean a student who has paid student membership dues to the National Rehabilitation Counseling Association.
- (C) "Officer" shall mean those elected officials who comprise the executive board of S.R.C.A.
- (D) "Advisor" shall mean the faculty representative who is responsible for advising S.R.C.A.

ARTICLE I: NAME AND PURPOSE

Section 1.

The name of this organization shall be The Student Rehabilitation Counseling Association, (S.R.C.A).

Section 2.

The purpose of S.R.C.A. is to be an organized support group for all students in the Rehabilitation Counseling Program. The organization will provide a student liaison among faculty and students, and will provide the opportunity for networking among students and rehabilitation professionals. S.R.C.A. shall remain a very close and active affiliation with local or state chapters of the NRCA. S.R.C.A. will be an advocacy group in the support of disabilities rights in the university and community at large.

As often as possible S.R.C.A.'s activities will provide the opportunity for "experience sharing" among students by highlighting relevant practicum, internship or work experience with S.R.C.A. members.

S.R.C.A.'s commitment to issues of rehabilitation within the University community and the community at large is a fundamental priority within all aspects of S.R.C.A. Meetings, newsletters and other social activities shall strive to provide avenues through which the academic, personal, social and professional needs of its members may be met. The grassroots structure of S.R.C.A. encourages and depends upon the participation of its members at every level in order to realize the overall goal: the development of highly competent, ethical and creative rehabilitation professionals.

ARTICLE II. MEMBERSHIP

Section 1.

S.R.C.A. will not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, ethnic origin, sex, age, political persuasion, sexual orientation, disability, mental status, or marital status.

Section 2.

1. Membership in S.R.C.A. should be open to Rehabilitation/Rehabilitation Counseling students.
2. Any rehabilitation/rehabilitation counseling student who desires to become a member of S.R.C.A. shall be a student member of the National Rehabilitation Counseling Association.
3. Membership privileges, which will realize the purpose and goals of S.R.C.A. are as follows:

- A. Voting rights in all elections and proposals.
- B. Formal representation to the faculty and academic programs.
- 4. Membership in S.R.C.A. shall terminate in respect of a person who ceases to be a student prior to graduation.

ARTICLE III: OFFICERS

Section 1 – The Executive Office

The Executive office shall include the following officers: President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer.

Section 2 - Officer Elections and Nominations

Elections for office will be held by the second week of fall term. New officers will take office immediately upon election. Verbal nominations will be made during the S.R.C.A. general meeting. Elections will be by secret ballot of majority vote at that meeting. The S.R.C.A. Secretary will be responsible for the counting of votes.

Section 3 - Duties of Officers .

The President shall preside over all S.R.C.A. member meetings and board meetings following the agenda presented in the bylaws. The President will represent the S.R.C.A. at local or state NRCA chapter meetings as well as the Rehabilitation Counseling Program Advisory Committee.

The Vice-President will oversee the following committees of S.R.C.A.: Programming, Service, Social, Fundraising, and Public Relations.

The Secretary will keep the minutes for all meetings and will be responsible for keeping the S.R.C.A. activity reports detailing events and activities of the organization. The secretary will make copies of the minutes or any changes and distribute them to all members. The secretary will also keep attendance on file of all member meetings and executive board meetings. The Secretary will submit the Annual Student Chapter Report to the National Rehabilitation Counseling Association by October 1 of each year.

The Treasurer will be responsible for the collection of membership dues, paying of bills and keeping track of all financial transactions performed by S.R.C.A.

Joint Responsibilities of the Executive Board

Although each office has its specific duties and responsibilities, jointly the executive board will:

1. Act as liaisons between students and faculty on matters concerning curriculum and student affairs/relations.
2. Have Administrative input into agendas for general and executive S.R.C.A. meetings.
3. Ensure the appointment/election of vacant offices.

Section 4 – Specifics of Office

Vacation of Office and Co-Office -The office or co-office position shall be ipso facto vacated if:

1. The person ceases to be a student at the University.
2. The person ceases to be in good standing with S.R.C.A.
3. The person ceases to be a member of the National Rehabilitation Counseling Association.
4. If by notice in writing to the S.R.C.A. Executive Board of individual resignation.

Good Standing Removal - Any officer or co-officer may at any time be removed from office and another appointed by the affirmative vote of two-thirds of S.R.C.A. members. At the general meeting duly called for that purpose.

A person is considered to not be in good standing if he/she fails to carry out the duties of office and/or fails to actively participate in the association.

Accountability - Officers shall be fully accountable for their designated areas. However, they may oversee their responsibilities directly or indirectly by appointing and monitoring a committee.

Presidential Signature - On such occasion that the Presidential signature is required on any form or document, the President shall recognize that it is solely for administrative purposes and not in terms of ultimate authority over S.R.C.A.

ARTICLE IV: OPERATING PROCEDURES

Section 1 – Executive Board Meetings

Place of Meeting- The executive board meeting may be held at any place at any time without formal notice if all officers are in consent. Should full consent not be given, a notice of three (3) days will be issued to all officers who must make every effort to attend such meetings.

Voting- Any major decision at the executive level must have all officers in attendance. Questions arising at any meeting shall be decided by majority vote. In case of an equality of votes, the question shall be resolved by the general membership.

Authority- Decisions regarding major policy changes, project support and objectives, and other decisions of major consequence to S.R.C.A. shall be decided by the general membership. Financial decisions over twenty dollars (\$20.00) must be approved in a members meeting.

The planning of an agenda for such meetings will be the responsibility of all officers.

Section 2 - General or Member Meetings

1. General member meetings shall be held at such time and place as may be prescribed by S.R.C.A. in the general meetings. The first meeting of each academic year shall be held no later than the second week of fall semester classes for the purpose of electing officers and registering the organization by the deadline.
2. At least (7) days notice of any general meeting, specifying the place, the day and the hour of meeting and the general or special nature of business shall be communicated to the members at large (the non-receipt of such notice by any member shall not invalidate the proceedings with consent of two-thirds of the members.)
3. A general meeting may be convened on shorter notice than ten (10) days in any manner that such members think fit at any general meeting.
4. Each Officer shall be responsible for giving a report and addressing questions regarding the relevant delegated areas, during meetings at which this is deemed suitable and at the Executive meetings.
5. The presence in person of one-fourth (1/4) of the regular members shall be the necessary amount to constitute a quorum at general meetings for the purpose of passing resolutions or conducting business (decision making process).
6. Each regular member shall have one vote.

Section 4 – Committee Structures

Programming Committee-- Shall include but not be limited to the organization and implementation of S.R.C.A. speakers, presentations and other related activities during meeting times.

Service Committee---Shall include but not be limited to the assessment of significant community needs vis-a-vis the association mandate to provide services to or advocacy role towards satisfying that need.

Social Committee---Shall organize and implement special occasion events such as socials and holidays.

Public Relation---Shall inform both the University and outside community at large of special events, who we are and what we do. Forms of communications should be Posters, Newspaper, Television, Radio, State News and word of mouth, etc.

Fundraising---Shall be responsible for developing and organizing fundraising events to generate funds to support S.R.C.A. and its activities.

ARTICLE V: AMENDMENTS

1. Amendments to these By-Laws shall be initiated by the general membership by a two-thirds vote, at a general meeting or by petition bearing the signature of twenty percent of the members.
2. Amendments shall be considered ratified by a two-thirds affirmative vote at a general meeting.
3. An amendment shall become effective immediately following its ratification.

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SAMPLE MENTOR PROGRAM

Goals of the Mentor Program.

To develop a line of communication between professionals in the field and incoming students that encourages and supports students in academics, professional networking and professional development.

To keep students active as student members of the national and state associations in order to encourage them to remain active as professional members.

To facilitate joint ventures between State or Local Chapter members and students.

To encourage student leadership in NRCA and State/Local Chapters.

Role of the State Chapter Mentor.

To establish a relationship with his/her student.

To reach out to student professionally and personally to involve them in state, regional and national NRCA activities, committees, conferences, trainings, etc.

To encourage student to explore and discuss professional viewpoints and perspectives.

To encourage students to publish good and innovative ideas in professional journals and newsletters.

To adhere to a two year commitment.

To brainstorm with students and show them how they can best be involved.

To help students with internship and job placement ideas.

Role of the Student.

To apply and maintain active membership with NRCA.

To make a two year commitment to the mentor.

To establish rapport and a relationship with the mentor.

To use this opportunity for professional and growth.

To get involved and stay involved by attending and participation in professional development activities.

Mentor Program - Implementation

Phase 1: Development - Spring

A departmental/SRCA introduction letter is sent to the State or Local Chapter and its individual members outlining and detailing the Mentor Program.

The Mentor Program is highlighted and discussed at a Spring State Chapter meeting for suggestions and feedback from members and preparation for implementation.

Accepted incoming students are asked to submit a brief, one paragraph summary of their goals and objectives for professional development and involvement at the student level.

Phase 2: Student Contact-Summer.

Student descriptions are given to State Chapter members during a summer board meeting. Members are asked to choose one or two students to form a mentoring relationship.

Students can be selected based on their professional objectives, interests, and geographical location, etc.

Participating State Chapter members send letters or make phone calls to their perspective student(s) and introduce themselves and notify student(s) of the Fall Orientation Meeting when mentors will meet their students.

Phase 3: Implementation-Fall Orientation Meeting

Each participating State Chapter member will be introduced to the students during either the annual fall orientation meeting that the rehabilitation counseling program has or during the first State Chapter meeting following the start of the academic year.

Students are given a schedule of the remaining State Chapter meetings for the calendar year.

Phase 4: Semester Wrap-Up.

All participating students, mentors, and faculty will attend a gathering at the end of the semester or school year.

If so desired some type of recognition could be given to an outstanding mentor at the time.

Mentorship Program – Student Information

Name: _____ Email: _____ Phone _____

School Address: _____

I am interested in learning more about the following settings: (Please circle all that apply)

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Comprehensive Rehabilitation Centers | Community Mental Health Centers |
| Hospitals | Private/ Non-Profit Rehabilitation Facilities |
| Department of Veterans Affairs | Independent Living Centers |
| Private Rehabilitation Companies | Employee Assistance Programs |
| State/Federal Rehabilitation Services | Psychosocial Rehabilitation Programs |
| Schools | Industry (Disability Management) |
| Substance Abuse Treatment Programs | |

Other (Please Describe) _____

I am interested in learning more about the following disabilities:

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| Spinal Cord Injury | HIV/AIDS |
| Head Injury | Learning Disabilities |
| Visual Impairment | Neuromuscular Diseases |
| Mental Illness | Developmental Diseases |
| Substance Abuse | Hearing Impairment |
| Injured workers | |

Other(Please Describe) _____

Is there a specific geographic area that you are interested in? If yes, where is it?

Please write a brief, one paragraph description of what your plans are for professional involvement both as a student and a professional. Are there any specific areas you are interested in (lobbying, legislative affairs, advocacy) etc.

COMMON PROBLEMS WITH ACTIVITIES

All start up, no movement: Often in the planning stages everyone is eager to get the idea under way but then enthusiasm dwindles and the event never seems to get off the ground.

Possible Solution: When the activity is being planned, set deadlines for each stage of the project.

- § Do not plan the activity too far in advance so that people lose interest.
- § Plan step-by-step what needs to be done and assign responsibility to more than one person.
- § Follow up to make certain the activity is on track.

Lack of funds: Some activities require there to be a substantial financial base to get off the ground, without these funds frustration sets in and the group can decide that it is impossible to do that activity.

Possible Solution: Make certain that creative funding ideas have been tried.

- § Have you asked people to donate their time/space/talents for free advertising and publicity?
- § Is there anyone in the organization who can provide what is needed at a reduced rate?
- § Have you petitioned the university activity board or graduate student organization for funds?
- § Can you do the activity with another student organization and share the costs?
- § Are there alternatives to the original idea that cost less?
- § Has a fund raiser been tried?

Lack of interest and participation: by the student members, sometimes the best of activities are not attended and hours of hard work can go to waste.

Possible Solution: Make certain that you are asking students in the program what they want to do, never assume that what the Executive Board (i.e., chapter officers) wants everyone wants.

Make certain that students are told far in advance what is being done so that they can get excited about the event and arrange time in their schedule.

If an event does go with little participation ask why people didn't attend (e.g., was it the time, the place or the event itself). This information should be included in the program evaluation.