

Until recently there were no minimum qualifications for a person to be an SSA VE. We had individuals without college degrees, individuals with degrees in fields not related to vocational rehabilitation, and individuals who did not know what the DOT, Selected Characteristics or Classification of Jobs were. As a result, members of IARP, ALJ's, claimant representatives and others advocated that minimum qualifications be put into place, resulting in the requirement that SSA VE's in the future must be certified either by CRCC or ABVE.

Since these regulations came out, ABVE has received numerous inquiries from SSA VE's who do not meet the new requirements, asking that we reduce our certification requirements so they can maintain their employment. However, we have a duty and obligation not only to the certifiants of CRCC and ABVE, but also to the Social Security Administration, that we maintain the standards that they sought to be followed for SSA VE's. These two certifications act as the "gate keeper" so to speak, on behalf of the Administration. They allow individuals with different backgrounds and different educational tracks to work as SSA VE's, but even with these minimum qualifications, a person will need to become familiar with the process and requirements of the Administration's program. In addition, these credentials are not interchangeable. Being an SSA VE does not give the person the skill set to testify in a forensic case, nor does it give them the skill set to complete traditional vocational rehabilitation counseling. The opposite is also true, individuals with CRC or ABVE certifications will need to develop skills to be successful as SSA VE's.

It is the desire of ABVE to assist individuals in becoming forensic vocational experts, which has always been our focus. As an SSA VE for the past 24 years, I can confidently say that the skills required to work as an SSA VE are not what are required to testify in state or federal courts. SSA does not require written reports, there is no vocational interview, determination of pre- or post-event earning capacity, etc. However, being an SSA VE is a fantastic way for individuals to expand their scope of practice to include forensic testimony and can make it easier to develop relationships with attorneys who represent personal injury plaintiffs. I encourage SSA VE's to seek out training in this area and find a mentor who can help them through the process.

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