**Script for Vocational Exploration**

**Slide 1:**

Hello, my name is Maria Sullivan, and I am a Procedures Analyst with VR&E Service.
Today, we are going to review the main areas to remember when helping your claimants with vocational exploration so that a suitable vocational goal can be identified.

**Slide 2:**

Today the training objectives will cover:
Vocational Exploration Requirements
Vocational Exploration Activities
Information Interview Questions
Documenting Vocational Exploration
and
Resources to assist your claimant with vocational exploration.

**Slide 3:**

Vocational Exploration is defined in M28C.IV.B.2.01. It is the process of assisting the claimant in selecting a suitable vocational objective consistent with his or her abilities, aptitudes, and interests, which does not aggravate his or her disabilities. Vocational exploration is the foundation on which a solid rehabilitation plan can be developed. Therefore, exploring different career options with your claimant prior to plan development is essential. I would like to emphasize here that if a claimant has transferable skills from past training or work experience in the same or similar occupation this must be considered prior to exploring other job goals that require additional training.

**Slide 4:**

As mentioned, vocational exploration is an essential part of the rehabilitation planning process. While it is not always possible to identify a final vocational goal prior to plan development, initial vocational exploration counseling must be provided to claimants before a claimant enters into an IWRP or IEAP as well as anytime these plans are redeveloped in the VR&E program as specified in M28C.IV.B.2.02. However, vocational exploration is not required for the development of an IEEP but can be used as a plan objective.

**Slide 5:**

M28C.IV.B.2.03 details many vocational exploration activities that can be used to assist claimants in identifying a suitable vocational goal. Some examples of these activities include:

* **The completion of vocational assessments** which provides objective information of the claimant’s current abilities, aptitudes, and interests.

Keep in mind, vocational assessments may be waived in specific circumstances as outlined in M28C.IV.B.1.03.f.6.

Examples of these circumstances include:

1. If the claimant has completed vocational testing in the last three years through Chapter 31 or Chapter 36,
2. If the claimant provided a transcript that can be used in lieu of vocational testing,
3. Or when the claimant has the most severe disabilities that prevent him or her from participating in the assessment.

I would like to emphasize here that the VRC must use his or her professional judgment in determining if a vocational assessment can be waived.

If the assessment is waived, the VRC must provide justification for doing so in Section 2 of VA Form 28-1902n, Counseling Record – Narrative Report (Supplemental Sheet). Vocational assessments may include a variety of assessment tools procured by your local Regional Office.

* **Another activity is to utilize various vocational exploration support resources** such as the Employment Coordinator, Disabled Veterans’ Outreach Program specialist, Local Veterans’ Employment Representative, or a college or university career counselor. These individuals can have a wealth of knowledge about various occupations from which claimants can learn.
* **The exploration of labor market information** includes using websites like bls.gov and O\*netare important activity as it can help claimants develop realistic expectations in terms of salary, job growth potential, and the level of education or training needed to pursue various occupations.
* **The completion of informational interviews** with professionals working in the field or similar field a claimant is interested in pursuing, is another activity that the claimant may find helpful. The purpose of an informational interview is for the claimant to obtain first-hand knowledge about an occupation from someone who currently works in that field by asking specific questions regarding that profession.

**Slide 6:**

As stated on the previous slide, an informational interview is a useful vocational exploration activity. Informational interviews can help clarify the claimants’ questions about the career field. Assist your claimant with developing the questions that are important to him or her. This slide provides some examples of questions that a claimant may ask during an informational interview. Additional examples of questions can be found in M28C.IV.B.2.03.i.

**Slide 7:**

Completing vocational exploration activities with your claimants is essential, however, it is also important to remember to document these activities on VA Form 28-1902n, upon completion. This includes information regarding the completed vocational exploration activities, observations from the aptitude and interest testing, and the suitability of the selected vocational goal. Remember to include supportive documentation such as the employment outlook, transferable skills, and the claimant’s disability conditions that may impact whether the goal can be successfully pursued. A description of the program goal, intermediate objectives, and services needed to achieve the planned goal must also be clearly documented on VA Form 28-1902n.

While not specifically related to vocational exploration, it is important to mention that a review for a potential retroactive induction must be completed if a claimant has previous education or training. If the claimant does have previous education or training, the criteria outlined in 38 CFR 21.282 must be met for a retroactive induction to be approved.

Lastly, it is important to verify that a claimant has sufficient entitlement remaining to pursue whatever job goal is agreed to in the rehabilitation plan.

For a complete list of items that must be documented on VA Form 28-1902n, please review M28C.IV.B.2.04.

**Slide 8:**

This slide summarizes a few resources that you may find helpful in assisting your claimants with the vocational exploration process. These resources include Bls.gov, Onetonline.org, usajobs.gov, askjan.org, and indeed.com. I encourage you to review the chapter on vocational exploration for additional recourses which can be found in M28C.IV.B.2.

**Slide 9:**

I would like to thank you for participating in today’s training and I hope you have found this information to be helpful. Today you have learned the main areas and resources to remember when helping your claimants with vocational exploration so that a suitable vocational goal can be identified. Remember vocational exploration is the foundation on which a solid rehabilitation plan can be developed. At this time, please proceed with the knowledge check questions to assess what you have learned today.