Vocational Rehabilitation Social Policy Lab at UNLV

OFFICE OF DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT POLICY
NEVADA

A partnership between VR Nevada and the School of Social Work at UNLV

VR Counselors are the main point of contact with our clients and are essential to the success of our programs. To expand the pipeline of Nevada graduates to careers in Vocational Rehabilitation, we have established a partnership with the UNLV School of Social Work.

The most common degree type among current VR Nevada counselors is a Master's in Social Work.

Why should we expand the pipeline of MSW graduates to careers as VR Counselors?
Graduate programs in social work prepare students to be compassionate, trauma-informed, and skilled case managers. In other words, social workers with an MSW degree are coming in with important foundational skills. This means there is a significant workforce of social work graduates that should be recruited for positions in VR Nevada.

How will this initiative prepare social work graduates to be successful VR Counselors?
Many social work graduate students at UNLV have expressed interest in VR counselor positions, but we need a stronger bridge between broad case management skills to specific knowledge and expertise working with disability populations. Through experiential learning opportunities, students will expand their skillset prior to applying for VR jobs.

What will this initiative entail?
ODEP is actively working with faculty members at the UNLV School of Social Work on developing this initiative. We are piloting a student graduate assistantship in the Fall 2026 semester to establish proof of concept. Our current student intern is conducting a policy analysis on AI-assisted hiring practices and creating resources for VR staff and our partners on how to support their clients through applications that incorporate AI tools. We will assess this pilot in an effort to refine a full curriculum for the Social Policy Lab.

How will we measure success?
We will measure this initative's success under the following anticipated outcomes:

- Ability to conduct policy analysis and produce actionable recommendations for VR Nevada and our partners.
- Development of expertise in systems-level change that can compliment existing case management skills.
- Increase in VR counselor hires with MSW degrees and stronger case closure metrics among these employees.