



Understanding Rehabilitation Counseling through Advocacy Work

Advocacy encompasses a variety of strategies for advancing a cause or supporting an individual; its purpose is to create needed change, whether that is on a societal, institutional, or personal level. Advocacy can also involve professionals (such as counselors) promoting their respective professions. It is a crucial component of executing effective rehabilitation counseling, but it is not typically given adequate attention in teaching, research, and fieldwork training within our profession.

One of ARCA's goals is to assist in the professional development of rehabilitation counselors. As advocacy work is an essential component of one's professional identity, the American Rehabilitation Counseling Association (ARCA) is very interested in engaging students and contributing to their development as rehabilitation counselors. Accordingly, we have developed a program that we call *Understanding Rehabilitation Counseling* as a way of encouraging students to learn more about their chosen profession by becoming involved in their local community through a rehabilitation or disability-related project. This year, the focus of the projects will be *doing advocacy work in collaboration with a local partner or mentor*. That should be a person or group from the disability community that has a need or cause and that wants the energy and support of additional advocates to help address the need or promote the cause. Therefore, this program is a great opportunity for you to do the following:

1. apply what you have learned
2. learn more about current issues/needs first-hand
3. develop new skills through collaborative community service
4. share your advocacy experience with the rehabilitation counseling community through an ARCA event at the 2017 ACA conference (some of your conference expenses will be reimbursed), receive a certificate award, and a feature in ARCA's Spring newsletter.

We hope that you will take advantage of this opportunity. For those interested in this professional development and advocacy opportunity, guidelines can be found in Appendix A.

Selected RCT programs will receive a reimbursement to cover up to \$800 of the conference expenses for their student representative(s) to attend the ACA conference in San Francisco, March 16-19, 2017.

Email UnderstandRC@gmail.com with any questions about the program.

**Appendix A
Guidelines**

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1. By **September 30, 2016**, students who are currently enrolled in a Rehabilitation Counseling Training (RCT) program need to email their proposal to UnderstandRC@gmail.com. See below for the proposal template. A group of students organized via a student organization, a shared course, and/or just willingness to work together can submit proposals. Only one proposal per RCT program can be submitted. A letter of support must accompany proposals from the RCT Program Director or faculty advisor.
2. The ARCA Board will acknowledge (via email) receipt of proposals by **October 7, 2016**.
3. Groups that submitted a proposal will then have until **January 8, 2017** to do their project and email to UnderstandRC@gmail.com an executive summary describing its implementation. A letter of support must accompany executive summaries from the RCT program Director or faculty advisor. See below for executive summary guidelines.
4. All executive summary submissions will be given due consideration and two RCT programs will be selected. Student representative(s) from these programs will be asked to present on their *Understanding Rehabilitation Counseling through Advocacy Work* during the ARCA reception during the 2017 ACA conference, receive a certificate award, and a feature in ARCA's Spring newsletter. All RCT programs that submitted an executive summary will be formally recognized at the ARCA reception.

Selected RCT programs will receive a reimbursement to cover up to \$800 of the conference expenses for their student representative(s) to attend the ACA conference in San Francisco, March 16-19, 2017. Students must be members of ARCA before **Dec. 1, 2016**.

5. Selected RCT programs will be notified via email by **January 16, 2017**.
6. RCT program Directors/Coordinators must notify (email UnderstandRC@gmail.com) the ARCA Board by **February 1, 2017** which student(s) will receive conference registration reimbursement.

Proposal Template

Understanding Rehabilitation Counseling through Advocacy Work

Type and email this form to UnderstandRC@gmail.com by **September 30, 2016**

Student serving as primary contact for this project:

Name _____ email: _____ phone: _____

University & Department: _____

Faculty contact: Name _____ email: _____

Development of your ideas, resources, and strategies for the Advocacy Project

1. The *proposed* title for this project is:

 2. Proposed plan of activities:

 3. Explain how you came to your initial awareness of the need for advocacy on this issue/cause.

 4. Upon further research (reading, talking with informed stakeholders, networking, etc.), we now have the following more informed/documented evidence of the need for our advocacy project.

 5. We plan to take the following steps to ensure that our project put us in a relationship of mutual learning and advocacy efforts with persons who have a disability.

 6. At this point, we know or anticipate the following may be factors during the course of the project:
 - (a) **facilitating factors/resources** that we can use to get the job done:

 - (b) **complicating factors/barriers** that we may have to deal with:
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Executive Summary Template

Executive summaries are limited to four pages, must be typed, and emailed to UnderstandRC@gmail.com by January 8, 2017

Executive summaries should include the following:

1. Description of the project (e.g., what was your advocacy project designed to accomplish, what actually occurred during implementation of your project, how did you educate target audiences about the issue).
2. Briefly discuss project significance (e.g., how does your advocacy project contribute to or advance the field of rehabilitation counseling and your issue or the local community).

3. Identify partnerships/collaboration (e.g., please explain the external partnerships that were necessary to the creation/implementation of your project; discuss how you will or could address the continued needs of the advocacy project).
4. Briefly discuss outcomes (e.g., to what extent your plan implementation was successful; what setbacks or barriers were encountered; how you overcame obstacles and suggestions for future efforts).
5. Briefly discuss how your project promoted rehabilitation counseling (i.e., increased the awareness of our profession and ARCA).

Email UnderstandRC@gmail.com with any questions about the program.