One of my biggest goals in life is to help others and make a different in their lives. Vocational Rehabilitation does that every day. That is why I choose to do my internship with them. The Voc Rehab helps people with impediments to employment find and keep jobs. The Impediment can be but not limited to Substance abuse, Mental retardation, Cerebral palsy, spinal injury, Mental illness, epilepsy and many others depending on a person passed employment. For example a construction worker who can no longer work because of a spinal injury might come in to get retrained to work with computers. It receives 80% of it’s funding from the federal government.

The people who work at Vocational Rehabilitation referee to it as VR. To be counselor at VR, one needs to have a masters degree in rehabilitation counseling, which is offered by East Carolina University. It is a two year program.

The vision of VR is to be known as North Carolina’s leading employment resource for persons with disabilities, business and industry and to promote inclusion into the community. The goal of VR is employment. The mission statement for VR is to promote employment and independence for persons with disabilities through customer partnerships and community leadership. The only people who are automatically edible for services are those who receive SSI and SSDI. Counselors can provide vocational evaluations, job training, guidance and counseling.
Some of the 1999 highlights of the VR program are 9,415 North Carolinians with disabilities completed their Individualized plans (IPE) and achieve their goals. It is interesting that 98% were placed in completive employment. Completive employment means that their job was in the regular work schedule. VR ranks eighth nationally in the number of individuals served whose outcomes placed them above the poverty line. The percentage of the clients who worked more than 20 hours a week was higher than the national average. The average weekly earnings of our clients before receiving services were $37 dollars after achieving employment that average increased to $268.

The division of Vocational rehabilitation is made up of two departments, Vocational Rehabilitation program and Independent Living. Independent Living is a program that helps people who have severe disabilities to be able to live without help with others. Independent living provides services that enable these individuals to live and function in the homes and communities of their choice. They help with independent living skills and training, home and vehicle modifications, peer counseling, rehabilitation engineering, adaptive aids communication/environmental control systems and many other things. In 1999, the state of North Carolina division of Independent Living serviced 5,177 individuals. 1,712 of these clients achieved their independent living goals. Of those assisted with IL serves, 294 were reimbursed for consumer managed part-time personal assistance. Over 94% of the participants surveyed expressed satisfaction with the program. I did not get to work with this program.
Literature Review

It was important in my internship that I become familiar with the DSM-IV, Vocational Rehabilitation’s Manual and the Coastal Horizons Resource Guide for the Cape Fear area. The DSM-IV is the manual that list all disorders from developmental disorders to mental illness to substance abuse. It is used as a guide to diagnoses illness. It helped me understand the client’s disabilities. The Vocational Rehabilitation Manuals List all procedures and codes that a counselor has to follow. I also came familiar with the Coastal horizons resource guide for the Cape Fear area. I also found information on voc Rehab at their website. It is found at www.dhhs.state.nc.us/docs/divinfo/dvr.htm.

My Internship

During my internship I have had the pleasure of working with many different counselors. From January to March, I worked in the main office. The first counselor I worked with in the main office is Maureen Foote. She is has the Pender County case load and the New Hanover County case load for people whose last name begins with R thru Z. She has the largest caseload. Under Maureen Foote, I learn how to do intake. I observed several interviews with clients. She had the clients tell me what it was like to be in their shoes. I also learned about The Salvation Army homeless shelter, New Hanover County’s jail system and, the Wilmington Treatment Center.

One of the things that Maureen did was to have me do job research for clients. I looked up many different kinds of jobs. The type of jobs I looked up for clients were catering, surveying, sectaries, data entry, sales, receptionist and graphic arts design. I also
did research on different careers within majors in college. She also had me look up resources in the community for cancer patents. I also did research for medication payment programs for cancer programs. Maureen also took me on a tour of Burgaw and showed me different resources in Pender County, including the Department of social Services, Heath Department, Employment Security Commission, Cape fear Community College and Job Link which is a department of Employment Security Commission that helps people with applications and resumes.

I worked with Valerie Pearsall next. She is a VR technician who works with Maureen Foote and Christy King. Under her, I job shadowed her interviews as well as learn intake, filing and making appointments for people to come in. I also drove around Wilmington to find clients who we had lost contacted with so we could close their cases.

Valerie also took me on a tour at Keys. They have a job training program for people who have disabilities. They teach job skills such as sewing, recycling, baling, sorting, woodcutting and many others. They have contracts with area companies to train people to do their job.

Next, I worked with Kathryn Harrelson. Her job is to find jobs for clients. She took me on a tour of the New Hanover County Employment Security Commission and on an interview with a prospective employer. She is also in charge of a program at Voc Rehab that teaches clients proper interview skills, how to fill out applications and to do resumes. She also runs a program called Job Club that clients come in and she helps them find jobs, fill out applications, do resumes, and drives clients around in the community to apply for jobs.
In the main office I also worked with Amy Price, She works with the mental retarded and those with developmental disabilities. I sat in with her on interviews with clients and with meeting with different agencies that help those in the community. I sat in meeting with The Arc of Wilmington, South Eastern Mental Heath Center, The Lighthouse of Wilmington, First in Families, and United Cerebral Palsy. As well as sitting in all the staff meetings. I learned about different resources in the community for people with different developmental difficulties.

After spring break, I was moved to the New Hanover school system of VR. There are four people who make up the New Hanover school system team. Rachel Towns, who services Hoggard, Mike Turner who has Hanover high school, Libby Mackey who serves Laney and Dora who is their VR Technician. All three consolers serve Lakeside high school. If a child lives in a currant district, he or she would be served by that counselor. For example, if a child is in the Laney district but goes to lakeside then he or she would be served by Libby Mackey.

Vocational Rehabilitation helps students with disabilities by helping them choose their future paths. They offer testing to help students choose a major or a career path. They helps students choose a college or trade school, Help with tuition and books if there is a financial need. VR can help the students find jobs if that is what they want right out of high school. They will even help them find part-time jobs while they are going to schools. The only thing is VR must get parents permission if the child is under 18 and they usually works with junior and seniors.

Next, I am working with Libby Mackey at Laney high School. Under Libby, I have sat in on intake of applications and on setting up plans for their future paths. I sent
out letters notifying student and parents about our program. I look up Jobs for students who wish to go straight into employment and copy files to send for vocational evolutions. I did follow up calls to update files. I have enjoyed working with Libby. I have also sat in on IEP meetings. Met with parents to talk about their Childs future plans.

**Applied Sociology**

During my internship, I saw how sociology worked and the difference between the social classes. Most of the clients that I met in the general caseload had several things in common. They all were from the working class. They worked as wielders, Tree climbers and construction workers and had worked those types of jobs until their bodies could no longer do those types of jobs. Many had drop out of high school because a family member had gotten sick or died and they had to take care of their family. My applied sociology class helped me because there I had learned how to do research on the internet and was also was able to help clients do their resumes and cover letters.

**Limitations**

The biggest limitations in my Internship is the fact I am only available two hours a day, Monday thru Friday. It would have been better if I could have fixed my schedule so that could have stayed all day long maybe two or three days a week. The reason that my time at VR was limited was because I had no childcare for the afternoon. Both of my children have Autism and require Speech Therapy. If I had more time, I would have been able to do more for the Vocational Rehabilitation counselors and would have learned more.
Reflections on My Internship

I have learned a lot through my internship. I have gained experience now working with people from all different social backgrounds. I have worked with people who have substance abuse problems, the homeless, those who are developmentally disabled and those who are mental challenged. I have found out that I enjoy working with teenagers more than Adults. They seemed more opened minded and ready to make their future.

This internship has made me clearer of what I want to do in the future. I want to either work with the developmental disabled children or with others who are down on their luck, maybe with the Department of Social Services. I hope to be able to go back and get my masters degree in five years.