

## **Guide to Obtaining Benefits Counseling Certification (Colorado)**

The State of Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) recognizes two certifications as able to meet the requirements needed for successful provision of benefits counseling services to eligible DVR job seekers.

To learn more about these certifications, please see below (in no particular order):

### Option 1:

**Certification Title: Community Partner Work Incentive Coordinator (CPWIC)**

**Certification Provider: Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU)**

Cost: \$0

Course Delivery Style: Virtual (ZOOM Platform)

Max # of students per cohort: 20

Instructors Per Webinar: 2

**Prerequisites:** Successful Completion of Introductory Web Course

<https://vcu-ntdc.org/training/introductory/introindex.cfm>

(Must register for an account on VCU-NTDC site)

Amount of Time to Complete: Self Paced Course  
Consisting of 6 One-Hour webinar lesson  
Must complete all 6 lessons within two weeks

Upcoming Introductory Web Course Trainings:

<https://vcu-ntdc.org/training/introductory/introcal.cfm>

**With successful completion of the Introductory Web Course, an individual is eligible for and able to register to attend the “CWIC and Community Partner Initial Training and Certification.” Admittance into this training is limited to priority groups as described below.**

### **CWIC and Community Partner Initial Training and Certification details:**

The Initial Training consists of a rigorous 40-hour training program that supports developing the basic knowledge and skills that are necessary to provide individualized work incentives counseling at a novice level. Initial training participants can expect the following:

Amount of Time to Complete:

20 webinars over 10 business days (two 2 hours sessions per day) - Required  
Reading material required and necessary prior to and after webinars

**Certification Phases:**

**Part I** of the certification process takes place over the eight-week period immediately following the Initial Training.

- Must complete a series of eleven online competency-based assessments

Successful completion of the assessments **results in provisional certification** and authorization to continue on to Part II of the certification process.

Amount of Time to Complete:

Part I, on average, takes 25-45 hours over the eight-week period.

**Initial Training and Part I Certification Overview**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Webinar hours</b>	<b>Reading assignments</b>	<b>Assessment requirements</b>
1	20	Estimated 10 hours	None
2	20	Estimated 10 hours	None
3 - 10	None	Review and research manual for assessments as needed	25-45 hours over the 8-week period

**Part II** of the certification process takes the assessment process to evaluating participants' ability to apply the concepts in developing Benefits Summary and Analysis (BSA) reports for actual Social Security beneficiaries they are serving.

- Must submit and have successful reviews of three BSA reports during the 10-month period immediately following successful completion of Part I.

Amount of Time Considerations:

Length of time to write BSA's can be dependent on outside factors including but not limited to:

- Requesting verification of benefits from administering organizations

- Interaction with beneficiary
  - Benefit profile of beneficiary
- To support the completion of the full certification process, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation may authorize for benefits counseling services to be completed by a provisionally certified benefits counselor that is completing the three BSA's required to obtain the full certification.\*\*

\*\*Each BSA MUST BE REVIEWED by a fully certified benefits counselor (CWIC, CPWIC, or WIP) upon completion prior to payment on authorization. Review by the VCU Trainers is sufficient.\*\*

### **Registration Requirements for admittance to CWIC and Community Partner Initial Training and Certification:**

Benefits Counseling staff funded and employed through a Work Incentive Planning and Assistance (WIPA) Project have first priority to attend all trainings.

*(WIPA projects are funded by the Social Security Administration in all 50 states and the US territories with the purpose of providing benefits counseling services. The certification received by staff funded and providing services under the WIPA project is called "Community Work Incentive Coordinator.")*

The Social Security Administration then admits attendees based on the following criteria. The attendees are known as Community Partner staff and they can obtain the "Community Partner Work Incentive Counselor" certification.

### **Community Partner Registration Requirements (see full list at link):**

1. The registrant must work for an Employment Network, including administrative EN provider affiliate staff, or State Vocational Rehabilitation agency.
2. Because class participants will work with beneficiary Personally Identifiable Information, SSA requires all Community Partner staff participants have a favorable suitability determination from Social Security prior to registration.

Participation requirements link: <https://vcu-ntdc.org/training/initial/partireq.cfm>

### **Priority groups for admittance to CWIC and Community Partner Initial Training and Certification:**

Once registration closes, Social Security will approve and confirm registrants to participate according to the following priority list:

1. WIPA project staff, including WIPA Program Directors, who require initial training and certification in order to provide services to Social Security beneficiaries.
2. WIPA Program Directors who will not provide direct services to beneficiaries, but who will provide direct supervision to WIPA staff.
3. Certified CWICs and WIPA Program Directors who would like to participate in the training as a refresher.
4. Community partner staff who will provide individualized work incentives counseling to Social Security beneficiaries at least 16 hours per week, according to the following priority list:
  - Priority 1: Employment Network staff (You work for your agency's EN and EN provider affiliate and you have suitability clearance. DUNS number required)
  - Priority 2: State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) staff
  - Priority 3: Social Security Demonstration Project staff (advance permission from Social Security Contracting Officer Representatives (CORs) required)

**Upcoming scheduled Initial Trainings:**

<https://vcu-ntdc.org/training/initial/calendar.cfm>

**Continuing Education Requirements:**

Certified Community Partner Work Incentives Counselors are required to earn eighteen (18) credits of training provided by the VCU National Training and Data Center (NTDC) annually. Continuing Education Credits are free and only offered through VCU.

Option 2:

**Certification Title: Work Incentive Practitioner (WIP) Credential**

**Certification Provider: Cornell University**

Cost: \$1,525

Course Delivery Style: Virtual (Adobe Connect)

Max # of students per class: unlimited

(average class size - 75; largest class to date - 160)

Instructors Per Webinar: 2

**Prerequisites: None; but Cornell Instructors recommend completing VCU's introductory web course prior to this course.**

<https://vcu-ntdc.org/training/introductory/introindex.cfm>

**Training Details:**

This intensive certification program for Benefits Practitioners requires participation in **17 webinars**, completion of a **provisional certification online examination** as well as a **file review** that, upon successful completion, will result in full certification.

Amount of Time to Complete:

Webinars occur 2 times per week over a period of eight and a half weeks.

The online examination will be administered two weeks after the conclusion of the webinar series and participants will be allowed a full work week (24/7) to complete the examination.

Within 6 months of successfully completing the examination a file review will be completed by Cornell faculty to ensure that the provisionally certified Benefits Practitioner is actually able to effectively use the information obtained through the webinar courses and written materials. This includes completion of one Benefits Summary and Analysis (BSA).

- To support the completion of the full certification process, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation may authorize for benefits counseling services to be completed by a provisionally certified benefits counselor that is completing the file review (including Benefits Summary and Analysis) required to obtain the full certification.\*\*

**\*\*Each BSA MUST BE REVIEWED by a fully certified benefits counselor (CWIC, CPWIC, or WIP) upon completion prior to payment on authorization.  
Review by the VCU Trainers is sufficient.\*\***

**Continuing Education Requirements:**

Full certification can be maintained by securing **60 hours of continuing education units (CEU) over the 5 year period immediately following the attainment of full certification**. An online “portal” will be made available for logging CEU activity.

**For More Information:** <https://www.ytionline.org/webinarsseries/1>

**Cornell Contact / Instructor:** Ray Cebula: [rac79@cornell.edu](mailto:rac79@cornell.edu)

**Instructor:** Ed Lopez

**Private Sessions Available** (example: All Colorado):

Cost: \$16,500 for up to 25 participants

Increase of \$3500 for 26-30 participants

Increase of additional \$3500 for 31-35 participants

Course Delivery Style: Virtual (ZOOM Platform)

Max # of students per class: unlimited

Instructors Per Webinar: 2