

## National Career Development Association

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### For Immediate Release:

## The Importance of Career Counselors

Career counselors may not be among the oldest professions in the world, but they may be among the most valuable. Peter Manzi, a career counselor and consultant in Rochester, New York, suggests that career counseling may be one of the most underutilized of counseling services. "In my experience, many adults have told me, 'If only I had met with a career counselor during high school...or college...'" These are the views of people in their 30's, 40's and 50's who now need or choose to make a career change. In recent times, job losses have pressed some people into unexpectedly making major career changes. Others may have plateaued in their jobs, are burned out, want help with advancement, are considering returning to college, or may actually be planning a first or second career for the first time ever.

Manzi has also worked with college and high school students and their parents to help explore the appropriate career plans for their children. School counselors have training in career counseling, but face so many other duties that career planning takes a back seat to scheduling, crisis management, mental health counseling, and other administrative duties. Manzi said that counselors can expect diverse work with clients from all age groups, socioeconomic statuses, spiritual/religious orientations, and from a variety of cultures, including gay, lesbian and bisexual; people of color, and people with disabilities.

Career counselors do a number of things to help people make important life transitions and related educational and career decisions. In general, an initial interview is required where a client's situation is assessed and the appropriateness of the services is determined. If services are needed, clients are then informed of the fees, what to expect, likely number of sessions, and the logistics of sessions. The number of sessions may vary, and may include the assessment of a client's work and educational history, formal and informal assessment of values, skills, aptitudes, interests, and personality factors and goal setting objectives. Clients may also use computer-assisted guidance systems, such as *Discover* or *Choices*. Some clients may seek help with a job

search, including resumes, interviewing, follow-up and networking skills. Others may need labor market or occupational information, which are provided free by the U.S. Department of Labor's O\*Net, Occupational Outlook Handbook website and the Bureau of Labor Statistics

One current change in counseling has been the growth of cyber-counseling, including the use of e-mail and the Internet for providing counseling services. According to Spencer "Skip" Niles, a professor of counselor education at Pennsylvania State University and the President Elect of National Career Development Association (NCDA), "There are more career services available to consumer's than ever before, and many of the latest developments involve the Internet." He adds, "It is important for career counselors to know what these resources are and how to use them in an ethical and professional manner." NCDA sets ethical standards for the field including guidelines for the provision of career services on the Internet.

Many professional people offer "career services", but only those who are licensed as counselors in licensure states may call themselves counselors. According to Manzi, the qualifications of career counselors should be very important to consumers wanting help with their career. The NCDA, the premier US-based association dedicated to career counseling provides a list of six major groups of career counselor competencies: Career Development Theory, Individual/Group Counseling Skills, Individual /Group Assessment Skills, Information/Resources, Diverse Populations, and Ethical and Legal Issues. In addition, NCDA is the recognized leader in developing standards for both career counseling and the evaluation of career information materials. NCDA works with licensing and credentialing bodies to support the recognition of career counselors and career development facilitators.

Manzi, who has been a member of NCDA for over 20 years, promotes the NCDA special membership categories that recognize expertise in career counseling: the Master Career Counselor, Master Career Development Professional, and the Fellow. Consumers who want to learn more about how career counseling may benefit them can access the NCDA web page at [www.ncda.org](http://www.ncda.org) and locate the Consumers and Job Seekers section for a list of resources. Included in that section is *NCDA's Consumer Guidelines to Selecting A Career Counselor*. According to Deneen Pennington, NCDA Executive Director, "Our website provides a list of MCC's, MCDP's and Fellows in every state with contact information as well as many links to state career development associations and activities." Manzi concludes, "My goal as a career counselor is to give my clients every opportunity for finding work that they value and that values them. The person who finds work that is meaningful and constructive is far more fulfilled than one who just 'goes through the motions' or is deeply distressed by a job or the lack of one. Work is a major part of a person's identity- if one's work life bodes well, so will other aspects of her or his life."