

## Best's Insurance Law Podcast

### [How Vocational Rehabilitation Impacts Claims - Episode #157](#)

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**Hosted by:** John Czuba, Managing Editor

**Guest Expert:** Dan Thompson of [DeeGee Rehabilitation Technologies, Ltd.](#)

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**John Czuba:** Welcome to “Best’s Insurance Law Podcast,” the broadcast about timely and important legal issues affecting the insurance industry. I’m John Czuba, Managing Editor of *Best’s Insurance Professional Resources*.

We are pleased to have with us expert service provider Dan Thompson, President and CEO of [DeeGee Rehabilitation Technologies](#) with offices in Ontario and Arizona.

Dan has worked with litigation arena for over 13 years. He is a registered rehabilitation professional, registered vocational professional, and a certified life care planner. His company services include providing expert opinion to insurance carriers, attorneys, and medical professionals by assessing the needs and vocational capabilities for people with disabilities.

Dan, thanks again for joining us today.

**Dan Thompson:** Hey, thanks for having me again, John. I really appreciate the opportunity.

**John:** Today, we’re going to be discussing vocational rehabilitation. Dan, for our first question, could you tell our audience, what is vocational rehabilitation?

**Dan:** Well, that’s a great question, John. Vocational rehabilitation, or as we in the industry call it, voc rehab, it’s primarily a process that enables people with functional, psychological, developmental, cognitive, and/or emotional disabilities to overcome their barriers to either access.

In other words, if they’ve never had employment before, to get a job, maintain, or to return to the workforce, if of course they’ve had an injury. What that really means is the best means practice to try to get people back to work or just pure employment for the first time. Now, some of the techniques might include doing a formal assessment for people who have never worked before.

That may mean resume-writing and/or how to conduct oneself in an interview. For those who have worked before, it may be a matter of doing an ergonomic test to see what the environment is like, program evaluations, research. In other words, let’s find out how practical it is for someone to get back in the workforce, goal-setting and planning.

In some cases, it might even be health advice to help them mitigate their disability to support return to work. Some of the career counseling, job analysis, in other words, what does the market going to be bearing at this point, Job development, of course, and other related services.

Sometimes, it's a matter of doing a functional or a work capacity evaluations. What that means is that we try to ascertain whether they're working in a secondary, a medium, and/or a heavy capacity. The sort of things can they do physically to meet those goals.

**John:** Dan, what are some of the other factors that also need to be considered?

**Dan:** When you're looking at vocational rehab, basically, assuming that person worked before they have the acumen, the first rule of thumb, John, is to try to get them back into the same job. However, that may not be possible due to their physical and/or cognitive limitations that prevent them from working in that capacity.

For example, a construction worker may not have the physical, or she may not have the physical capacity to carry up the demands of their job. If the job is unionized, for example, you may even have to look at the collective bargaining agreement and take that into consideration as well.

If you cannot get them back to their old job, the next rule of thumb, of course, is to try to get them back to the same employer, but to look at perhaps their transferable skills. If we take that same construction worker, he may not be able to frame a house, however, depending on their aptitude and skills, they may be able to develop the blueprints for that same house.

That is they may be able to become a crew manager, and/or a project manager for the same housing project. A tool that's used to accomplish that, that we in the vocational rehab industry use, is called a transferable skills analysis. The attempt is to try to take what that job requires in terms of what skills are needed, then to look at what that person has, and try to come up with a match.

That's the main things that we would look at. Usually, 9 times out of 10, they're pretty successful.

**John:** Dan, how about any differences in how vocational rehabilitation is handled in Canada as compared to the US?

**Dan:** I don't think there's a huge difference. Most states and/or provinces have a VR department, that's a vocational rehab department. That may manifest itself in different ways. What they try to do is work with job seekers with disabilities to secure or maintain employment.

Before I became a registered rehab professional, a registered vocational professional, and a certified life care planner, I co-founded a company called Kolvox Communication. In essence, what we did is we developed voice recognition products to improve the productivity for people with disabilities.

In essence, what we do is we do that same means analysis I talked about before, working with the province's VR department so that if the person had a job, that they needed a computer with voice recognition or some other adaptation, to ensure they could meet the productivity, that's where that would come into play.

That way, you look at what the deficits are physically that this person has, and try to match the technology accordingly. In the US, the Department of Labor uses what they call the Dictionary of Occupational Titles or DOT. In Canada, we use what they say is the NOC, that's the National Occupation Codes. Both of those systems try to attempt to standardize the language for job descriptions.

We try to look at what type of job categories might be out there, the education needed, the type of temperaments, physical demands. What kind of temperatures are they working in? For example, people with burns may have to have a high consideration on what type of temperatures are being exposed to. It takes everything into consideration.

They also look at the employment numbers. In other words, how realistic is it for you to get a job without saturated by the amount of players out there? These are all very helpful tools in helping someone try to get a job. As I indicated before, there's not a whole lot of difference in the US and in Canada.

**John:** How about the impact on claims, Dan? Can you tell us that?

**Dan:** After all, AM Best, that's what they're here for, is to look at what impact it's going to have on the insurance industry. If we look at the unemployment for people with disabilities in the United States, it was registered as eight percent in 2018. John, that's almost twice the rate for people without disabilities, I should say, which was 3.7 percent.

In Canada, those numbers are even more striking. If we look at that, and we take into consideration that the unemployment rate was as low as 5.8 percent, whereas people with only mild disability had 35 percent unemployment rate, and those with severe disability had a 74 percent rate.

When we take all that into consideration, what exactly does that mean? We look at the average minimum wage in the United States, that's \$7.25. In Canada, we're looking at \$11.06. Either way, on face value, it doesn't seem to be a huge loss of earnings claims that the person would have.

However, if they're young, and say, 19 or 20 years old, and you're going to be amortizing that over the rest of their, what we call work life, well, if you expose that for, say, another 45 years, we could be looking at a loss of earnings claim almost as much as a million dollars. Basically, what we try to do is make sure that they can hopefully get some type of employment, either part-time or full-time.

Even if they work, say, as a Walmart greeter, I think that's going to improve their quality of life. It's going to enable them to get out, socialize and meet with people. That's the important thing. People don't sit around when they go to a party. The first thing people do is ask you, what do you do for a living? I'd much rather say, "I work at Walmart," than to say, "I sit at home, and I'm unemployed."

**John:** Dan, what do you see for the future?

**Dan:** That's a very interesting question. I think what we need to look at is the different ages in employment. For example, the Agricultural Revolution enabled people to produce more food, and enabled them to have more time to pursue leisure activities. Of course, it improved their quality of life, and therefore, they didn't have to spend all their time foraging for food just to stay alive.

The Industrial Revolution created even new industries such as the automotive industry where skilled workers were replaced with low-skilled workers, and employees were both underpaid and overworked. One only has to look at the movie "Norma Rae" to see what type of deplorable work conditions were out there.

In the post-Industrial Age, basically, most people are being displaced. For example, bank tellers are replaced by machines. You go to your local Starbucks, you may or may not even be served by an employee. It might be by a machine. Where jobs are displaced, new opportunities become available.

For example, the same employees who worked at Starbucks may now be working in technology jobs to support the same industry. Again, people are making money in different ways. Nowadays, there are bloggers or YouTubers that are out there that are making vast amounts of money that wouldn't even be possible, say a few years ago.

Although conventional jobs may be going by the way of the dodo, as I indicated before, it opens up vast opportunities in other areas that perhaps aren't conceivable until that industry comes into play. That's the way I see things, John.

**John:** Dan, thanks again so much for joining us today.



**Dan:** Thank you for having me, and look forward to doing it again sometime.

**John:** You've just listened to Dan Thompson, President and CEO of [DeeGee Rehabilitation Technologies](https://deegeerehab.ca/), with offices in Arizona, and Ontario, Canada. You can learn more about Dan's company at <https://deegeerehab.ca/>. Special thanks to today's producer, Frank Vowinkel.

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I'm John Czuba, and now this message.

Transcription by CastingWords

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