The VR Advantage

North Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Services
A disability can cause a person to be less hopeful about living a productive life.

When you become a vocational rehabilitation consumer, your rehabilitation plan will focus on your abilities and your new possibilities. The process is outlined in this booklet. The goal is gainful employment.

Applying for vocational rehabilitation services may be your own idea, may be recommended by family members or by:

- Teachers or school counselors
- Doctors or other health professionals
- Mental health professionals
- Counselors or professionals in the judicial system

If you have ever wondered how you could benefit from a vocational rehabilitation program and what your employment options are, remember that the VR staff are ready to answer your questions and assist you in the application process.

Who Is Eligible?

You are eligible for vocational rehabilitation services —

- If you have a physical, mental, or emotional disability that affects your ability to find or keep a job; and
- You require the services that VR provides to get ready for, find, or keep a job; or
- If you have a disability and are receiving SSDI or SSI benefits and you intend to get or keep a job.

North Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VR) assists individuals with disabilities with obtaining, retaining or maintaining employment.

Discover Your Possibilities

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Your First VR Appointment

As a first step, you will meet with a VR staff member who will get to know you and learn about your needs, desires and challenges. You will learn about the vocational rehabilitation program and, if you choose, complete an application. To meet your needs, your VR counselor will need some information about your disability. You may be asked to:

- Provide medical records. If you have been referred to VR by a doctor or other professional, you may have been given these records and asked to bring them to your interview.
- Sign a release form so your counselor may obtain medical, educational, psychological or other information.
- Have a medical, psychological, vocational or other type of evaluation that will be arranged by your counselor.
- Verify your SSI/SSDI eligibility.

Your counselor will:

- Guide you through each phase of the process.
- Explain the eligibility requirements for VR services.
- Help you plan and obtain your job choice.

Once you and your parent or guardian (if necessary) have signed the application, the rehabilitation process begins.

With your help, your counselor will review your information and make a determination on your eligibility. You and your counselor will form a partnership and explore your options.

Getting Started With Your Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Determining Your Eligibility

The first step in the process is to gather information to assist you and your counselor with making a decision about your eligibility for services. If you are eligible, your Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) may be developed immediately. In some cases, after you are determined eligible, additional information or evaluations may be needed before your IPE is developed. This information will assist in choosing an appropriate employment goal and the services you need.

If More Information Is Needed...

If there is uncertainty about VR services being able to help you gain employment, we may arrange for you to have a “trial work experience” where you’ll work for a short time in a real job. You won’t be paid for this work, but it will be an important way for you and your counselor to decide if you are able to work. If you are not, you may not be eligible to receive VR services.

Determining Your Rehabilitation Needs

You and your counselor will identify your needs, interests, and skills and how you think and learn to determine your vocational goal and necessary services. The services listed on the next page are available to help you complete your rehabilitation plan. Some may be provided by VR staff; others may be provided by other agencies in your community.
VR Services
The length of time you receive the services outlined in your plan will depend on your individual needs. Services can be provided by:

- Your VR counselor and other VR staff
- Community rehabilitation programs
- Community colleges and universities
- Vocational training programs or schools
- Treatment centers
- Mental health centers
- Employers (with, for example, community based-work experience)

The following are offered, at no cost to you, if needed to reach your goals:

- Testing, evaluations and assessments
- Guidance and counseling
- Work-adjustment job-coaching
- Rehabilitation engineering services
- Interpreter services
- Supported-employment services
- Job-seeking skills training
- Job placement and follow-up

Making Use of All Resources
Your plan will outline how to best use all available resources. VR funds are not used when resources such as insurance, Medicaid, Medicare, and educational grants and contributions are available. These services may be provided at a charge that may depend on your income and other personal resources:

- Medical services such as hospital care or psychiatric treatment
- Community rehabilitation program training
- Costs related to college education or training
- While you are in training: services to family members, telecommunication, sensory and other technological aids and devices
- Personal assistance services, tools, equipment and licenses
- Other related goods and services

You and your counselor will explore and identify other community and financial resources that will help meet your rehabilitation goals.
The Goal
If you have never worked or cannot return to the kind of work you have done in the past, you may benefit from help with identifying different types of jobs that are related to your abilities.

Your counselor will make recommendations based on the evaluations or tests you have taken and the interests you have expressed.

You may change your goal later, but it is best to have a good idea from the start if possible.

Developing Your Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)

Your IPE Will Include:
- Your job choice
- Services, service providers, comparable benefits
- Evaluation criteria for the services you receive
- Your and VR’s responsibilities
- Your input, ideas, preferences
- The IPE handbook

Your Job Choice
This is the type of work or job that you and your counselor have agreed upon and plan to obtain.

The Services
You and your counselor will determine who will provide your rehabilitation services and how long these services should continue. VR’s major services include:
- Guidance and counseling
- Physical and mental restoration
- Training/education
- Rehabilitation technology
- Job-related services, such as job placement and follow-up on the job

Evaluation Criteria
For each service that you and your counselor plan, there will be an agreed-upon way to evaluate how and whether that service is assisting with your goal of going to work. These may include grade reports, medical reports, your own assessment of your progress, and your counselor’s assessment and observations.

VR’s Responsibilities
VR’s responsibilities with providing or coordinating services will be clearly identified in your plan.

Your Responsibilities
The part you play in completing your plan is important and will be clearly identified. Your counselor will work with you to be sure you understand what you are responsible for and how to meet your goals.

The IPE Handbook
Your counselor will go over the handbook with you and answer your questions. You may also be asked to sign a statement that you received the book, understand its contents, and helped develop your plan.
It is your responsibility to express concerns and satisfaction and participate during the VR process.

**Partnership**

You and your VR counselor will be partners throughout the rehabilitation process.

It is your responsibility to work with your counselor in planning and completing your rehabilitation plan. Your counselor will assist you in making informed choices related to your job goals, the services you will receive, service providers, employment settings and the methods for obtaining services.

- You can request, if you move anywhere in North Carolina, that your counselor transfer your records to the office closest to your new residence.
- If you move out of state, your counselor may not always have to close your case record but, if necessary, can give you information about contacting a vocational rehabilitation program in the state where you move.
- If you decide to take a job without the assistance of VR, please contact your counselor.
- If you cannot complete your plan for other reasons, please call or meet with your counselor to discuss your situation.

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**Local Office**

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<tr>
<th>Local Office</th>
<th>Telephone</th>
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Department of Health and Human Services | Aldona Z. Wos, M.D., Secretary
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