

Vocational Rehabilitation Services Handbook

OFFICE LOCATIONS

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1901 North DuPont Highway, New Castle, DE 19720
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18 N. Walnut St., Milford, DE 19963
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102 Waples Way, Georgetown, DE 19947
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IS VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION FOR ME?

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is appropriate for you if ...

- You want to work and earn a competitive wage.
- You have a medically documented visual impairment that is a substantial impediment to employment.
- You require specific services to become employed, retain employment or advance in your career.

VR is not for you if ...

- You don't have a disability.
- You don't want to work.
- You want VR to help you get Social Security or other disability benefits.
- You are here to get other benefits (i.e. food stamps, TANF, etc.).

VR CAN ...

- Help you identify your abilities and interests are so that you can choose a job goal.
- Help you determine your barriers to employment.
- Help you to change or minimize the barriers that are keeping you from working.
- Help you obtain and maintain employment.

THE BASIC VR PROCESS

STEP 1 (1-2 hours)

Intake/Application

An application for services & intake must be completed.

STEP 2 (up to 60 days)

Eligibility Process

You will receive an eligibility decision as soon as your counselor has enough information to make the determination. In most cases, this should not take more than 60 days

STEP 3 (up to 120 days)

Assessment & preparation for plan writing

During this step, you may be asked to:

- Complete interest inventories and community-based assessments
- Conduct labor market research
- Complete further evaluations to determine what job goal best suites your interests and abilities.
- Supply VR with your Ticket to Work (if applicable)

STEP 4 (time varies)

Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)

It is time for you and your counselor will outline the steps necessary to obtain employment. This is called your IPE. The plan will include:

- Your vocational goal & date to achieve it
- Specific services that will be provided
- Your responsibilities

STEP 5 (time varies)

Services

VR services may include but are not limited to the following:

- On-the-job training
- Job search assistance
- Education / training
- Books, supplies, tools
- Transportation
- Assistive technology
- Other required services

STEP 6

Successful employment

When you reach your employment goal & have been working for at least 90 days, you will be considered successfully employed & VR will close your file.

Post-employment services

Post-employment services may be provided after your VR file has been closed to help you maintain or advance in your job (if appropriate)

STEP 1: INTAKE & APPLICATION

If you want to apply for services DVI will:

- Ask you to complete the application process.
- Ask you to sign release of information forms so that records can be obtained from doctors, schools, and other relevant contacts to determine your eligibility (if needed)
- Set up appointments with doctors, psychologists, or other professionals to help your counselor learn more about your visual acuity and other disabilities (if needed).

Your VR counselor will talk with you about:

- Your disability and medical history
- Your barriers to employment
- What kind of job you want
- Your employment history
- Your education history
- Your hopes and dreams for the future
- What services you think you might need to obtain and maintain employment
- Information about your family, finances, etc.
- What services DVI offers and information about VR.

STEP 2: ELIGIBILITY

Once you have signed your application, your case will be opened. DVI has up to 60 days to determine if you are eligible for services.

Service eligibility is prioritized as follows:

- Totally Blind (no light perception)
- Legally Blind (20/200 visual acuity in the better eye with correction; or a field restriction limited to 20 degrees or less)
- Severely Visually Impaired (20/70 to 20/200 visual acuity in better eye with correction)

People receiving SSI or SSDI benefits who also want to work are presumed eligible for VR services; however, in order to receive VR services from DVI, applicants must also meet the visual acuity criteria as described above. Those who do not meet the visual criteria will be referred to the Delaware Division of Vocational Rehabilitation for employment services.

Your counselor will inform you if you are eligible within 60 days. It is important to keep your counselor informed of any changes to your contact information. Your counselor may ask you to sign a waiver to allow for extra time to gather information in order to make an eligibility decision.

STEP 3: ASSESSMENT & PREPARATION FOR PLAN WRITING

Once you are through the application and eligibility process, you and your counselor will meet to begin step 3. This is a crucial part of determining your employment success. What you get out of the VR process depends on what you put into it. VR is essentially a partnership between you and your counselor. Working together with your counselor, you have 120 days to complete this process.

Usually the first things you will discuss includes:

- Your strengths, interests, and abilities.
- The job market related to the career you are considering.
- Training programs and what is needed to apply for them.
- Choices you have while making decisions.
- Your barriers to employment and possibilities of working around them.

During this step, you may be asked to:

- Complete interest inventories.
- Participate in academic brush-up classes.
- Conduct labor market research.
- Complete further evaluations to determine what job goal best suits your interests and abilities.
- Sign a waiver allowing for more time to develop a realistic and achievable employment goal.

STEP 4: INDIVIDUALIZED PLAN FOR EMPLOYMENT (IPE)

Once you and your counselor decide on a vocational goal and services needed for you to achieve that goal, you will write your IPE. Your job goal will reflect your strengths, weaknesses, interests, and abilities. Your plan will contain all this information. The plan is a document that includes all the steps and services you need to achieve your career goals. The plan will also include the costs for services and how those costs will be paid. Who pays will be determined by your income

and may result in DVI paying for everything, you paying for everything, shared costs, or other agencies paying. If at any time, you feel you need something that was not identified, just ask your counselor. Your counselor will explain whether the services should be provided or not.

STEP 5: FOLLOWING YOUR PLAN – SERVICES

The IPE lists the services you will receive to help you achieve your employment goal. Some of the services may be provided by VR while others may be purchased by VR from businesses, schools, or community agencies. **ALL SERVICES FUNDED BY VR MUST BE IN YOUR PLAN AND AUTHORIZED BY YOUR COUNSELOR BEFORE THEY BEGIN.**

GUIDANCE & COUNSELING

Your counselor may directly provide guidance and counseling to you. Your counselor will work with you to help you understand the VR program and services that are available. He or she may also assist in understanding your disability and how it may affect employment. Your counselor needs to know what works for you and if you are having any difficulties to properly help you.

MEDICAL RELATED SERVICES

Your IPE may include services to reduce or work on the medical difficulties presented by visual impairments and additional disabilities. Where appropriate your IPE may include participation in programs like mental health, substance abuse treatment, or physical rehabilitation. Reducing limitations or difficulties presented by multiple disabilities can be reduced may expand employment opportunities. Physicians, specialists, therapists, or other licensed medical professionals may be partners in these services. If it is required for you to obtain employment, your IPE may include items like glasses, hearing aids, etc.

JOB PLACEMENT SERVICES

Obtaining employment is the goal of VR. At some point in your IPE, the focus may be on providing job preparation services. Sometimes the need for employment is immediate while others may wait to search for a job until other services, such as training, are completed.

An IPE may include assistance with:

- Locating job openings
- Completing applications
- Developing a resume

- Preparing for interviews
- Obtaining tools or licenses
- Getting uniforms or specialized work attire.

TRAINING RELATED SERVICES

It is important to have the skills necessary to become employed and to be able to maintain your employment. When necessary your IPE may include services that improve your skills.

Training services may include the following:

- **Job Coaching** involves a specialist who may work with your employer to provide training to you while you work, assist in setting up assistive technology, and ensure your job stability before fading out of the work situation.
- **On-the-job training** may be included in your IPE. This type of training pays employers a fee for providing the initial training while you work. This service requires that you, the employer and the counselor write and sign an agreement prior to the start of training.
- **Specialized workshops or individual classes** – sometimes necessary skills can be obtained by participating in short workshops or supplemental training programs.
- **Adult and community education programs** – Many communities have extensive adult education programs on computer skills, data entry, bookkeeping, accounting, and other areas. These classes can often be started and completed in a very short time and can help you obtain a specific skill necessary for employment.
- **Trade or Technical Schools** may be included in your IPE. The length of training offered through these schools varies. Programs may include computer support, bookkeeping, automotive repair, etc.
- **Post-Secondary Education** may be included in your IPE. Delaware Technical Community College and four year colleges will be considered while writing your IPE. Qualifying students may have assistance with tuition, books, supplies, specialized equipment, tutors, and other school-related services, included in their IPE.

You and your counselor will need to talk about your abilities and resources available to you.

When considering training, it is important to keep basic factors in mind:

1. Can you afford to cover living expenses while you attend school?
2. What are your current skills, abilities, interests, and resources?
3. What are your chances of success in employment after training?
4. What financial resources are available to you?

There are some tasks your counselor will ask you to do when considering a college, university, or technical school:

- Participate in academic testing

- Apply for admission
- Apply for federal financial aid (VR is unable to determine what assistance you will need until the college gives you a financial aid award letter).
- Meet with the school personnel to determine what their placement rate is in your desired field
- Meet with school personnel to discuss accommodations you may need in the classroom
- Bring your financial aid award letter to your VR counselor as soon as you receive it.

PROGRAM SUPPORT SERVICES

Sometimes while you are receiving services, it may be necessary for you and your counselor to solve unique problems. In some cases, you may be required to have specialized tools, safety equipment, or a uniform to enter employment. Or perhaps you need unique adaptive equipment to be successful in training or employment, or assistance to resolve transportation issues. Your counselor will work with you and assist when possible as these needs arise.

OTHER UNIQUE SERVICES

There are other unique services that may be available through DVI/VR:

- **Self-employment** – Sometimes an IPE may include assistance in entering self-employment. If this is your desired goal, your counselor will work with you and a self-employment vendor to complete of a business plan. The counselor must be able to document that you are prepared for managing a business and have the skills necessary to work within the business. You must have a completed, approved business plan prior to being able to write an IPE.
- **Orientation & Mobility (O&M)** - Certified instructors teach the skills needed to safely and independently navigate around the community. Training includes techniques to orient oneself to familiar and unfamiliar environments (orientation) and skills to safely use a variety of transportation methods (mobility).
- **Independent Living Services** can provide training for an individual with visual impairments on blindness related techniques for independent living in areas such as cooking, personal management, organization, care of the home, money management, and Braille. Many of these skills easily transfer to the work environment.
- **Assistive Technology Services** are available to assist with determining the best options for an individual with blindness to gain access to computers, the internet, or other technology. Specialists provide advanced training and technical assistance on adaptive software and hardware.
- **Blind Entrepreneur Program** provides opportunities for self-employment by operating a cafeteria, vending route, or retail establishment with government facilities. To qualify for this program, you must be: 1) a citizen of the United States, 2) legally blind, and 3) determined to be a blind person in need of vocational opportunities.

- **Benefits Counseling** – Navigating government benefits (SSI, Social Security, SNAP, Medicaid, etc.) can be an overwhelming and confusing process especially after you obtain employment. VR will assist you through this process by... so you have an understanding of how benefits are affected by employment and work incentives that you may be able to apply.

STEP 6: JOB PLACEMENT & SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYMENT

When you are ready to work, VR will assist you with finding a job in the manner that works best for you. Some people prefer to conduct their own job search while others may ask their counselor to help. Some of the ways VR can help include:

- Resume Development
- Preparing for interviews
- Assistance with completing applications
- Referrals to employers

At your request, VR will make direct contact with employers to discuss job related issues. When you are working in the job you chose in your IPE, your counselor will provide the follow along you need to keep your job. Your counselor will explain in more detail to ensure you understand the regulations related to available supports. Before closing your file, you counselor will discuss your employment satisfaction and explain what you should do if you need assistance in the future.

POST EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Services may still be available to you after your file has been successfully closed. If you feel you need additional services to maintain your employment, contact your VR counselor.

YOUR RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

As a client of the Division for the Visually Impaired / VR services, you have several rights and responsibilities. Your counselor can answer questions in detail but the following highlights some key rights and responsibilities. Interpreters, translators, special materials, equipment, and other modes of communication are available to ensure your understanding.

- ✓ You have the right to be treated with courtesy and respect. In return, VR asks that you extend the same courtesy and respect to our staff.

- ✓ You have the responsibility to carry out the steps identified on your IPE and to make reasonable efforts on your own behalf. This includes keeping appointments and attendance at scheduled activities; attaining acceptable grades/ratings during training; following medical or other professional instructions; and notifying your counselor of all changes in your situation.

DUE PROCESS

- ✓ You have the right to exercise choice in employment goals, services, and providers;
- ✓ You have the right to have a representative present any time you meet with DVI-VR staff;
- ✓ You have the right to challenge a decision affecting your eligibility for services and seek an informal dispute resolution;
- ✓ You have the right to mediate your dispute informally before an impartial mediator prior to a Fair Hearing;
- ✓ You have the right to an impartial fair hearing, where you may be represented by a person of your choosing, to present evidence and witnesses on your behalf;
- ✓ You have the right to an Administrative Review within 30 days of your request, if you are dissatisfied with the result of the fair hearing;

For a full listing of your Due Process rights, see the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR 361.57), and/or ask for the DVI-VR Policy manual section on Due Process.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT

You have the right to services without discrimination. DVR/VR complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998. Services are provided without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, physical or mental handicap, marital status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. If you believe discrimination is being practiced, you have the right to register a complaint with the Delaware Division of Human Relations. You can visit their website or call: <http://statehumanrelations.delaware.gov/services/discrimination.shtml>

New Castle County

Carvel State Office Bldg.
820 N. French St., 4th Floor
Wilmington, DE 19801
(302) 577-5050

Kent County

Cannon Bldg., Suite 145.
861 Silver Lake Blvd
Dover, DE 19904
(302) 739-4567

Sussex County

Thurman Adams Jr. State
Service Center
546 S. Bedford St.
Georgetown, DE 19947
(302) 856-5736

CONFIDENTIALITY

You have the right for your case file information to remain confidential. To determine your eligibility for services, you and your counselor will collect personal information about you and keep that information in a case file. This information may be medical, psychological, vocational or other information as deemed necessary to accomplish your goals. This information is considered confidential and is protected in your file. Because it is important to the mutual planning for services, your counselor will need your help in collecting this information. Without your assistance, VR may not be able to serve you.

DVI / VR is located within the Department of Health & Social Services and receives funding through the state of Delaware and the Federal Department of Education. VR uses your confidential information only for the purposes of administering services. We require your written permission to release your confidential information to programs, agencies and individuals not directly related to administering the VR program. We are required to release personal information if it is in response to investigations about law enforcement, fraud, or abuse and in response to judicial order. If you have any questions about our confidentiality policy or wish to read it in full, please ask your counselor.

INFORMED CHOICE

You have the right and responsibility to participate in the planning and development of your vocational goal and rehabilitative services. It is important that you tell your counselor about your wishes and inform him or her anytime you think your program needs changing. VR will provide you with the means and opportunity to exercise informed choice among suitable vocational goals in terms of your unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and needs.

SAFETY

You have the responsibility for and the right to a safe service environment which is free from intimidation, threats, or violent acts. Your counselor is required to report any act of violence, threat of violence or intimidation regardless of who initiates the incident.

HOW TO RESOLVE ISSUES & CONCERNS

CLIENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (CAP)

CAP provides information and assistance to individuals seeking or receiving vocational rehabilitation services under the Rehabilitation Act, including assistance in pursuing administrative, legal, and other appropriate remedies by:

- Explaining rights and responsibilities
- Helping consumers communicate concerns
- Giving information about rehabilitation programs and services.
- Explaining DORS policies and procedures.
- Providing advocacy when a service has been denied or if consumers are unhappy with a service provided.
- Arranging for legal services when necessary to represent consumers in a formal appeal.
- Providing information about employment rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

To discuss an issue with a representative from CAP, please refer to the contact information below:

Client Assistance Program – Main Office/New Castle County
700A River Road, Wilmington, DE 19809
(302)764-6216, (800) 640-9336, Fax (302) 764-6218
Moni Edgar Medgar.cap@ucpde.org

Client Assistance Program - Kent/Sussex Counties
3249 Midstate Road, Felton, DE 19943
(302) 335-3739, Fax (302) 335-5716
Blake Roberts broberts.cap@ucpde.org

Client Assistance Program – General Inquiries
Alice Stumpf astumpf@ucpde.org

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Revised: