

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Referral Process for Students with Disabilities in a Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) Residential Program

Definitions:

VR services: Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is a federal-state program that helps students with disabilities get or keep a job and enhance their independence. Services are based on the individual's specific needs as related to employment.

VR referral contact: Individual designated in the DJJ residential program to coordinate the VR referrals for students with an Individual Education Plan (IEP), Section 504 Plan or suspected as having a disability.

VR counselor: A VR employee assigned by the VR supervisor to serve the students in an assigned DJJ school.

Goal:

To DETERMINE ELIGIBILITY while the student is in a DJJ residential program and TRANSFER the case to the post-release district.

VR Referral Contact Preparations:

1. Go to the VR website (<http://rehabworks.org>) or following links and print copies of the VR Referral and VR transition youth brochures.
 - VR Referral:
<http://rehabworks.org/docs/VRreferral.rtf>
 - VR brochures:
http://rehabworks.org/stw_brochures.shtml
2. Obtain copies of the following forms from the school district:
 - Parental Consent to Make a VR Referral
 - Parental Permission for Release of Information and Records

Note: The title of these forms may differ in each school district and may even be combined into one form.
3. Contact the VR supervisor to obtain the contact information for the VR counselor assigned to the DJJ school. VR's Office Directory can be accessed at the following link:
http://www.rehabworks.org/office_directory.shtml.

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Steps for VR Referral and Application Process:

1. Send the following forms to the parent or guardian of all students with an IEP or Section 504 Plan who are ages 14-18:
 - Parental Consent to Make a VR Referral (school district form)
 - Parental Permission for Release of Information and Records (school district form)

Helpful Tips:

- Students 18 years of age and older may sign own documents
- Mail forms and VR brochures to parent or guardian with IEP invitation

2. If the parent or guardian signs and returns the forms (step one), send the referral packet to the VR counselor 30 calendar days prior to the Transition Conference.
 - The VR referral packet should include:
 - ✓ Signed forms (step one)
 - ✓ **VR Referral (preparation #1)**
 - ✓ Current IEP or Section 504 Plan
 - ✓ School transcripts
 - ✓ School attendance and discipline records, if applicable, and if prior school records are available
 - ✓ Mental Health Intake Records (can be obtained from case manager)
 - ✓ Medical information and current meds (can be obtained from case manager)
 - ✓ Psychological evaluation with axis diagnosis (can be obtained from case manager)
 - **VR referral contact's information for the VR counselor to coordinate communication and scheduling of the interview with the student**

Helpful Tips:

- Ask the juvenile probation officers (JPOs) to assist in obtaining signatures
- Include the VR Referral as a Transition Plan goal
- Ask the case manager to include the VR Referral as a Performance Plan goal

3. The VR counselor has 3 days from the date of the referral to make contact with the student. The VR counselor will contact the VR referral contact to speak with the student

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and to schedule the initial interview with the student and the parent or guardian via telephone. Because the VR Referral and VR Application are separate forms, the VR counselor is responsible for submitting the application and obtaining parent or guardian signatures on all required forms.

Helpful Tips:

- It is in the best interest of the VR counselor to schedule more than one initial interview on the same day, if possible.

4. Invite the VR counselor to the Transition Conference if the referral has been submitted prior to the Transition Conference, even if the VR counselor has not yet interviewed the student.

Helpful Tips:

- The day of the Transition Conference would be the ideal time to schedule the initial interview (preceding the Transition Conference).
- The VR Counselor may also attend the Transition Conference via telephone or other teleconferencing options.
- VR counselor's timeline:
 - VR counselor has 60 days from the date of the application to determine the student's eligibility using existing records or additional medical and psychological evaluation.
 - TRANSFER CASE to post-release district should take place between eligibility for VR services and the student's release.
 - VR counselor (in post-release district) has no later than 90 days from the date the student is determined eligible for services to develop the Individual Plan for Employment (IPE).

5. Indicate the student's eligibility for VR services on the student's Electronic Educational Exit Plan (EEEP).
6. Invite the student's VR counselor to attend the Community Re-entry Team (CRT) meeting in person or via conference call if the student has been determined eligible for VR services.

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Important Note:

- Although the student's case will be transferred to another VR counselor in the student's post-release district, the current VR counselor will be able to provide general information regarding VR services.

7. Communicate the student's eligibility for VR services to the DJJ case manager. The current VR counselor's contact information should be provided in the student's Case Summary and Plan for Success.

Important Note:

- The student, parent or guardian may also contact their local VR office once the student returns home to obtain the contact information of the new VR counselor. The VR Directory is http://rehabworks.org/office_directory.shtml.

8. Coordinate the Case Transfer
 - The parent, guardian or student if 18 years of age or older MUST request the transfer of the case. This transfer request can be a verbal request. The parent or guardian should be notified of this requirement at the student's CRT meeting. If the VR counselor attends the CRT meeting, the parent can request the transfer at that time.

Important Note:

- Since the goal is for the VR counselor in the student's post-release district to write the IPE, it is important for the student's case to be transferred as close to the release date as possible.

9. Include the VR counselor's contact information and the student's eligibility letter for VR services in the student's exit portfolio sent to the DJJ school district transition representative.

Resources:

- VR Services Referral Flowchart for DJJ Residential Programs
- Timeline and Checklist for VR referral contact
- VR Eligibility or Recommendation Template (to include in exit portfolios)

Note: Resources are available by contacting Carla.Greene@fldoe.org

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Frequently Asked Questions:

1. Can the VR referral contact submit the referral upon receipt of the signed documents in step 1?
 - Yes; HOWEVER, it is in the best interest of the student's transition back into their post-release district to submit the referral 30 calendar days prior to the student's Transition Conference. The emphasis should be on determining the student's eligibility for VR services while in the DJJ residential program. The goal is for the VR counselor in the student's post-release district to write the IPE. Because the VR counselors only have 90 days to write the IPE, submitting the application 30 days prior to the Transition Conference will ensure eligibility in the DJJ residential program and sufficient time for the VR counselor in the student's post release district to write the IPE.
2. Can the VR referral packet (see step 2) be sent to the VR counselor if some, but not all, of the forms are signed and returned by the parent or guardian?
 - At a minimum, the VR Referral AND Parental Consent for VR Referral can be sent to the VR counselor without the signed Parental Permission for Release of Information and Records; HOWEVER, all other education and information records CANNOT be sent until the Parental Permission for Release of Information and Records is signed.
3. What if the student's stay is extended?
 - The VR counselor has the option of requesting an extension for unforeseen circumstances.
4. How can the VR referral packet be sent 30 calendar days prior to the Transition Conference if there is no notification of the student's Transition Conference date until approximately 1 day before the Transition Conference?"
 - The EEEP which is housed in the Juvenile Justice Information System (JJIS) indicates the expected release date. Count backwards 90 days from the expected release date. That should be the date the VR referral packet should be sent to the VR counselor.
5. What if the VR referral packet is not submitted to the VR counselor 30 calendar days prior to the Transition Conference?
 - Submitting the VR referral packet 30 calendar days prior to the student's Transition Conference is ideal; however, the VR referral packet can be submitted any time prior to the student's release. The student's case will be transferred to the post-release district. Ideally, the student's eligibility should be determined no later than the student's CRT meeting. It is very crucial at the CRT meeting for

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all parties involved in the student's successful transition back into the community to be aware of the student's eligibility for VR services.

6. What if forms (step 1) are not signed and returned by the parent or guardian?
 - The designee who completes the EEEP should note that VR services are recommended and should be "followed-up" in the student's post-release district. The recommendation should be discussed at the CRT meeting.
7. Can the VR referral contact request a transfer of the case if the parent or guardian does not?
 - No. It is a VR requirement that the student's parent or guardian requests the case to be transferred. The student's current VR counselor's contact information should be on the EEEP and the student's Case Summary and Plan for Success. The student's JPO and assigned transitional specialist will assist in making sure the parent or guardian contacts the VR counselor to transfer the case.
8. Will the student need additional assessments to determine eligibility for VR services?
 - After reviewing all of the existing records in the referral packet (step 2), the VR counselor will determine if additional assessments will be required to determine eligibility. After the VR referral packet is sent to the VR counselor, it is best practice to notify the parent in the Treatment Team meeting or by a separate phone call of the possibility of an additional assessment or evaluation. The additional assessments or evaluation will be administered on site.
9. Is there a priority for referrals?

Prioritize by the following:

 - Students who have earned a standard high school diploma or state of Florida high school diploma (high school equivalency diploma) or who plan to take the high school equivalency exam (GED®)
 - Students who are 17 and 18 years of age who are in middle school or high school with very few credits, with low achievement levels and needing intensive instruction in preparation for the high school equivalency exam
 - Students who are ages 14 through 16

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For additional inquiries or questions, contact the following:

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