

HANDBOOK OF SERVICES



YOUR **GUIDE** TO EMPLOYMENT



HANDBOOK OF SERVICES

This handbook outlines the services offered by Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and provides an overview of the VR program. Keep this booklet handy so you can refer to it at any time. If you have questions, your counselor will be able to help you.

THE MISSION

To help people with disabilities find and maintain employment, and enhance their independence.

THE VISION

To become the first place people with disabilities turn when seeking employment and a top resource for employers in need of qualified employees.



THE PURPOSE OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is a federal-state program that helps people who have physical or mental disabilities get or keep a job. VR is committed to helping people with disabilities find meaningful careers.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR VR SERVICES?

You may be eligible for VR services if your goal is to become employed and:

- Your physical or mental disability interferes with your ability to get or keep a job, and
- You need VR's help to prepare for, get, or keep a job

Your eligibility will be determined within 60 days after you apply for services, unless circumstances beyond VR's control prevent or delay the decision.

If you receive Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for your disability, you are presumed eligible for VR services if you plan to become employed.

WHAT IS ORDER OF SELECTION?

When a VR agency doesn't have enough resources to serve every eligible person who applies, federal law requires that they serve people with the most significant disabilities first. The agency puts an "order of selection" in place to do this. Sometimes there is a waiting list.

Order of Selection establishes categories to which individuals are assigned based on the significance of disability. VR uses three Order of Selection category definitions:

Category 1 Most Significant – An eligible individual with a disability that seriously limits three or more functional capacities related to work and requires three or more primary services over a period of at least 12 months.

Category 2 Significant – An eligible individual with a disability that seriously limits one or two functional capacities related to work and requires two or more primary services over a period of at least six months, or an individual who receives SSDI or SSI based on his or her own disability.

Category 3 – An eligible individual with a disability that does not seriously limit a functional capacity related to work and/or services are expected to last less than six months.

If you are determined eligible for VR services, you and your counselor will discuss your category assignment, the waiting list, if there is one, and other resources that might help you.

WHAT IS FINANCIAL PARTICIPATION?

VR will look at the income of eligible individuals to determine if they will be required to share in the cost of VR services. Some individuals or services may be exempt.

If you are exempt, you will not be required to help pay the cost of your VR services. For example, a person without an income or those who receive SSDI or SSI are exempt.

Your counselor will discuss other exemptions with you during your initial visit.

If you choose not to provide the appropriate financial information to your counselor, you waive the opportunity to receive many VR services. For additional information, you may contact your counselor.

WHAT IS TICKET TO WORK?

Ticket to Work is a Social Security Administration (SSA) program available to Floridians. For those who qualify for social security benefits, tickets will be issued and may be taken to Employment Networks

(ENs), such as VR. These ENs offer access to employment and rehabilitation services necessary to help a person prepare for, get, or keep a job.

INFORMED CHOICE

Informed choice, or making a choice based on information, is the center of the vocational rehabilitation process.

Vocational Rehabilitation involves making choices about your job goals, services needed to reach your goals, and who will provide these services. You share responsibility with your counselor for identifying options and exploring the advantages and

disadvantages of each option.

Your choice of employment outcome must be consistent with your unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, and interests. Please ask questions as you work with your counselor so that you understand every available option.

WHAT ARE YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES?

- Maintain contact and talk to your counselor throughout your rehabilitation program. **Make sure that VR has your current address, email address, and phone numbers, especially if they change, so we always know how to contact you.**
- Provide your counselor with access to information and records that can help determine your eligibility for the program and services you need to reach your goals.
- Tell your counselor about any appointment or service **before you go** to the appointment or receive the service. VR has to authorize your services prior to the appointment. Don't make your own arrangements without permission, because VR will not pay for unauthorized services.
- Actively participate in developing your Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) by making choices, needs, and interests known to your counselor. If at any time you find that your program needs change, discuss this with your counselor.
- Make every effort to seek additional sources of funding for your rehabilitation. Sources may include Supplemental Security Income, Social Security Disability Insurance, Ticket to Work, Medicare, Medicaid, other insurance, public assistance, educational scholarships, and grants, and other community resources.
- Be on time and follow through with all appointments. When this is not possible, notify your counselor's office as soon as possible so that your appointment can be rescheduled. **Failure to keep or reschedule your appointment will delay your eligibility determination and services. It may also be viewed as a failure to cooperate with VR.**
- Fulfill your obligations as outlined in your IPE.
- Choose an employment goal, with your counselor's assistance.

“Maintain contact and talk to your counselor throughout your rehabilitation program.”

“Federal law requires that individuals with the most significant disabilities be served first.”



WHAT ARE THE STEPS TO REHABILITATION?

The rehabilitation process is a series of steps that will help you prepare for, get, or keep a job, based on your interests and abilities:

STEP ONE: APPLYING FOR SERVICES

Any person living in Florida who has a physical or mental impairment and is of working age or approaching working age may apply for rehabilitation services by contacting a VR office for an appointment.

STEP TWO: EVALUATION

Your counselor is interested in helping you get work, or determining what might be blocking your ability to get work. Any medical, educational, or other reports you have will be helpful in this process. If current information is not available, your counselor will help you choose providers for any necessary evaluations, at no cost to you.

Evaluations tell us whether there are treatments or other forms of assistance available that would support your efforts to get or keep a job. After evaluations are completed, if you are determined eligible for VR services, you will be placed in the appropriate Order of

Selection category and may be placed on the state waiting list (if there is one).

STEP THREE: REHABILITATION PLANNING

In this step, your counselor will work with you to develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). Your IPE includes your chosen employment goal, the VR services you will receive, and the amount of financial participation, if any. A signed copy of the IPE will be given to you for your records. If you choose to develop your own IPE, your counselor will provide you with the required parts of the IPE and the options available for developing your plan. Your counselor can assist you in developing all or part of your IPE. You and your counselor must agree and sign your plan. Developing an IPE can take up to 120 days.

STEP FOUR: RECEIPT OF SERVICES

VR can help you overcome or manage your disability while improving your ability to get and keep a job. Various types of services may be provided, depending on your needs.

STEP FIVE: JOB PLACEMENT

When you are ready to go to work, your

counselor or your employment service provider will:

- Help you find job openings in your community.
- Provide ideas and advice on filling out applications and interviewing for particular jobs.
- Work with your employer to modify the job site and provide assistive devices to meet your needs, if necessary.

After you begin work, your counselor will want to make sure that you and your employer are satisfied, and determine if other services are needed to help keep you working.

STEP SIX: CLOSURE

After you have worked successfully at your job for at least 90 days, you and your counselor will discuss ending the counselor's active participation in your rehabilitation. During this discussion, you and your counselor must determine that you no longer require VR services to maintain employment. If, at a later date, you need additional assistance to maintain your job, VR may provide post-employment services without the need to reapply.

WHAT IS AN OMBUDSMAN ?

The VR Ombudsman Office is an impartial service available to VR customers who have questions, concerns, or believe they may have been treated unfairly. The Ombudsman receives, investigates, and assists in resolving complaints and will assist you in resolving your customer service needs. You may contact an Ombudsman by calling toll-free (866) 515-3692 or e-mail ombudsman@vr.fl DOE.org.

WHAT ARE YOUR RIGHTS?

As a VR customer, you have the following rights:

CONFIDENTIALITY

Florida law allows VR to obtain medical and/or psychological information from doctors or other professionals after obtaining your written permission. This information is requested only to assist your counselor in determining your eligibility, and to determine the services necessary to help you get and keep a job. All information discussed with and given to your counselor is confidential. VR will not discuss or release any information about you without your written consent, as required by law, with the following exceptions:

- VR electronically exchanges customer information with the Social Security Administration (SSA). If the information does not match with SSA, VR will immediately notify the customer in writing to verify and, if necessary, correct our records.
- VR may release records to service providers as necessary to provide services to you.
- VR may release records to other Florida government agencies and legislative members who have requested information in the performance of official duties.
- VR is legally required to report declared intention to harm self, others, or property.
- VR is legally required to release information in response to investigations by local, state, or federal authorities and investigations of fraud or abuse.
- VR is legally required to release information, as necessary, to report abuse, neglect, or exploitation of an elderly person, a person with a disability, or a child.
- VR may discuss information regarding your rehabilitation services with the Client Assistance Program (CAP) at Disability Rights Florida when you have requested their assistance.
- VR may release information to employers for the purpose of verifying employment and wage information in the administration of the program.

WHAT IF I DISAGREE WITH THE COUNSELOR'S DECISION?

You have the right to appeal a decision when you do not agree, or if there is a problem that you are unable to resolve with your counselor. You are strongly encouraged to express your concern first to your counselor, to a supervisor, or to the Ombudsman, because they can resolve most problems. The Client Assistance Program (CAP) is also available, if you need advice, assistance, or an explanation of your rights. CAP may also provide representation during an appeal.

If your concerns are not resolved, you have the right to request an appeal. You have 21 days after receiving written notification of a decision to file a written appeal to the appropriate area director requesting an administrative review of your case by that area director.

If you are not satisfied after the Administrative Review or wish to skip this step, you may file a written request for mediation and/or an Administrative Hearing before the Division of Administrative Hearings (DOAH). You have 21 days after receiving written notification of the Administrative Review decision to request mediation and/or an Administrative Hearing.

To request an Administrative Hearing, you must write to:

**State Director
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
4070 Esplanade Way
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-7016**

When writing for an Administrative Review or an Administrative Hearing, you should:

1. Attach a copy of the counselor's decision letter with which you disagree, and
2. Include what remedy you want and believe will resolve the problem.

If you request an Administrative Hearing, mediation may be available. If you are willing to attempt to resolve your issue through mediation, please say so in your letter requesting an Administrative Hearing. If the mediation is not successful, the Administrative Hearing process will continue. If you need advice, assistance, or an explanation of your rights, you may contact the Client Assistance Program at Disability Rights Florida at (850) 488-9071 or (800) 342-0823.

WHAT IS THE CLIENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (CAP)?

The Client Assistance Program (CAP) at Disability Rights Florida was established to help with any problems related to services provided by VR. You may contact them at any point in your case process if you believe you need additional assistance outside of VR. You may contact CAP, the VR Ombudsman, or both.

DISABILITY RIGHTS FLORIDA

2473 Care Drive, Suite 200

Tallahassee, Florida 32308

(850) 488-9071

(800) 342-0823

TDD: (800) 346-4127

FAX: (850) 488-8640

For further information on Disability Rights Florida services, visit their website at www.DisabilityRightsFlorida.org

NON - DISCRIMINATION

It is against the law for the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) of the Florida Department of Education, as a recipient of Federal financial assistance, to discriminate against any individual in the United States on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability,

political affiliation or belief.

The application process used by VR to determine eligibility for services, any subsequent services, and the entire VR process are subject to these non-discrimination requirements.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU BELIEVE YOU HAVE EXPERIENCED DISCRIMINATION

If you think that you have been subjected to discrimination under a federally assisted program administered by VR, you may file a complaint within 180 days from the date of the alleged violation with either:

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Office of the Ombudsman

4070 Esplanade Way

Tallahassee, Florida 32399-7016

(866) 515-3692

Email: ombudsman@vr.fldoe.org

U.S. Department of Education

Office for Civil Rights (OCR)

61 Forsyth St. S.W., Suite 19T10

Atlanta, Georgia 30303-8927

(404) 974-9406

TDD: (800) 877-8339

Email: OCR.Atlanta@ed.gov

“The Client Assistance Program (CAP) at Disability Rights Florida was established to help with any problems related to services provided by VR.”



A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T

This Handbook of Services informs you about vocational rehabilitation. You and your counselor will review the information in the handbook when you apply for services. After review and discussion about the information in the handbook, your counselor will ask you to sign and return this form to acknowledge that you have received and understand the information provided. Please ask any questions you may have during this discussion.

I have received a copy of the Handbook of Services from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and have reviewed it with my counselor. I understand my rights of confidentiality, of appeal of decisions made by my counselor, and of rights to make informed choices about my vocational rehabilitation process. I also understand that I have the responsibility to actively participate in my vocational rehabilitation process.

Customer's Signature

Date

CUSTOMER COPY

A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T

I have received a copy of the Handbook of Services from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and have reviewed it with my counselor. I understand my rights of confidentiality, of appeal of decisions made by my counselor, and of rights to make informed choices about my vocational rehabilitation process. I also understand that I have the responsibility to actively participate in my vocational rehabilitation process.

Customer's Signature

Date

FILE COPY

VR ENCOURAGES
YOUR INPUT

Your input is very important, and VR cares about what you think of the program. During your rehabilitation and after you have finished your program, you may be asked to participate in customer satisfaction surveys. We hope you will participate in these surveys, because this information is very important and will be used to help VR keep a quality rehabilitation program in Florida.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR
STATE PLAN PUBLIC INPUT

VR offers a number of opportunities for public input about our state plan or related topics. You can find the state plan at RehabWorks.org/plans.shtml.

Here are some ways to give us input:

Mail: Strategic Planning Director
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
4070 Esplanade Way
Tallahassee, FL 32399-7016

Email: VRPlan@vr.fldoe.org

FAX: (850) 245-3362
Attn: Strategic Planning Director

You may also attend a Florida Rehabilitation Council (FRC) public forum during any of its quarterly meetings to share your feedback.

Your input is very important and will help VR provide quality services. For dates and locations of FRC/VR public forums, please contact your counselor, or call (800) 451-4327, or visit the VR website at RehabWorks.org/rehabcouncil.shtml. Again, your participation is important and encouraged.

DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

(850) 245-3399

(800) 451-4327

TTY users dial 711 to connect with the telecommunications relay service (TRS). Video phone users can call through the video relay service (VRS).

www.RehabWorks.org

www.FLJobConnections.com



***Vocational
Rehabilitation***

An equal opportunity employer/program. It is against the law for the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) of the Florida Department of Education, as a recipient of Federal financial assistance, to discriminate against any individual in the United States on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, political affiliation or belief.

The application process used by VR to determine eligibility for services, any subsequent services, and the entire VR process are subject to these non-discrimination requirements. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.

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