



Your Individualized Plan for **Employment** Handbook



North Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Services

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Welcome to VR!

As a VR client, you have:

- Completed an application for VR services, and
- Been determined eligible to participate in a rehabilitation program in order to find or keep a job.



What's Next?

You and your VR counselor will work together to develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).

This written document includes:

- Your job choice
- A list of services, service providers and resources which will be necessary to help you achieve your job choice
- A description of how the progress toward achieving your job choice will be measured or evaluated
- Your and VR's responsibilities
- Your input, ideas and preferences

Your IPE represents an agreement between you and your counselor about how VR will assist you in reaching your employment goals. You and your counselor may agree to amend your plan if there are changes in your needs, resources, or goals.

Confidentiality

Your VR counselor may have already requested medical or psychological records to determine your eligibility for VR services. Additional information may be gathered during the planning process.

The Rehabilitation Act requires VR to collect information about you that is used to plan your rehabilitation goals and services. This information may be shared with other VR staff who are helping you.

Information in your file may be used only for the purpose of planning and providing a rehabilitation plan. With your permission, information about you may be shared with other individuals or agencies that can help you reach your goals. Your counselor will let you know which individuals or agencies require your information and why.

All information that VR collects from you or about you is confidential and will be released to other individuals or agencies only with your informed, signed consent.

Sometimes VR also shares information for the purposes of research that may improve the lives of people with disabilities. No personal identifying information is released for research purposes without your approval.

Your counselor can give you more information about your records and how to request or change information in your file. Information from your record cannot be released without your consent, except under the following conditions:

- (1) If required by federal law;
- (2) In response to investigations in connection with law enforcement, fraud, abuse or in response to judicial order;
- (3) In order to protect you or others if you seem to be a threat to your own safety or the safety of others.

Your Rights

You have the right to:

- **Non-discrimination:** Your access to the VR program can not be limited based on your race, color, sex, age, national origin, political affiliation or belief, religion or type of disability.
- **Appeals:** You have the right to question and appeal a decision by your counselor with which you do not agree.
- **Confidentiality:** Information about you will be used only for your rehabilitation.
- **Informed Choice:** You have a right to be informed about and involved in choosing your goals, services and the programs providing such services in your rehabilitation program.

Your Partner in Planning

Your VR counselor has been trained to assist people with disabilities by recognizing how your disability might affect your ability to find or keep a job and by identifying ways to build on your strengths and overcome barriers.

Together, you (your parent or guardian, if applicable) and your counselor are the most important people in your rehabilitation process. Your counselor can help you to identify your strengths and needs in order for you to find a job or keep the job you have now.

How Can You Partner With VR for Success?

- Provide the disability-related information that your counselor requests, including information to verify your Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) benefits, if you receive them.
- Talk openly with your counselor about your disability, your feelings, and your needs.
- Keep appointments and arrive on time. You should call your counselor if you will be late or cannot keep an appointment.
- Ask questions if you do not understand something.
- Apply for and use other resources that may be available.
- Share in the cost of certain services as determined by you and your counselor.

- Do your best in testing, training and all rehabilitation programs.
- Maintain contact with your counselor and notify him or her of any changes in your living situation, your contact information, your disabling condition, your financial status or your employment situation.
- Demonstrate your participation and partnership by providing your (or your parent's or guardian's) signature on your plan documents.
- Abide by the "Code of Conduct."

Code of Conduct

In order to maintain a safe and supportive environment for our staff and customers, we ask that you comply with basic safety requirements:

- **No weapons**
- **No threats – verbal or physical**
- **No aggressive behavior – verbal or physical**
- **No harassment**
- **No property damage**

(Excerpted from the Agreement of Understanding)

Your Needs and Goals

After determining your eligibility for services, your counselor may need more information about your rehabilitation needs. You may be asked to have one or more of the following —

Medical Evaluation: Your counselor may recommend an examination by a doctor to obtain information about your disability and what you can and cannot do. The information may also suggest treatment that will help you get a job.

Psychological Evaluation: Your counselor may recommend an evaluation by a mental health professional to obtain more information about how you think, learn and behave. A psychological evaluation can also provide information about your abilities and aptitudes. You and your counselor can use this information to determine your training or treatment needs and the best fit for a job.

Vocational Evaluation: Conducted by a vocational evaluator — usually an employee of VR — a vocational evaluation uses tests, inventories and activities to find out about your interests, abilities and aptitudes to see how you might benefit from training and to determine your potential for certain jobs.

If you are referred for a vocational evaluation, you should do your best when taking the tests and doing the activities, but you need not feel nervous since there is no way to fail any

part of the evaluation. The vocational evaluation provides information that you and your counselor may consider when planning and preparing for your job.

Situational Assessment: A situational assessment takes place in real work settings. Your counselor will arrange opportunities for you to try out different tasks to see how you perform in certain situations. Your counselor may recommend that a job coach assist you in this assessment. A situational assessment provides information about your potential to achieve employment in these work settings and identifies which services you may need to support you on the job.

Facility-based Vocational Evaluation: A facility-based vocational evaluation takes place at a community rehabilitation program (CRP) facility. These programs are available throughout the state and may be available in your area. This type of evaluation allows you to try out simulated work.

These are real work tasks which you complete in the facility under the supervision of CRP staff. These tasks may be modified to allow you more time or more assistance to complete them. This evaluation provides information about how you perform work in a modified setting with supports.



Your counselor may discuss other evaluations with you if these would be helpful in getting more information about your needs or goals.

Choosing a Job Goal

From the first day you enter your counselor's office, all planning and services are provided to prepare you for suitable employment. Once you and your counselor have looked carefully at your abilities, strengths, challenges and interests, your counselor will provide guidance for you to make informed choices about your employment goals.

Your successful employment is the most important part of the VR program. Together — you, your VR counselor, other VR staff and community partners assist you in finding an employment opportunity especially for you. VR supports individuals in achieving suitable employment which pays competitive wages in integrated work settings.



Identifying VR Services

Once you and your VR counselor have agreed on a job goal, you will work together to identify those services that you will require to reach this job goal. These may be services or supports provided directly by VR staff or by another individual or community agency. Services are planned based on your individual goals and needs. No two plans will look exactly alike.

When Financial Need is Considered

Some services will be based on your financial resources.

Your counselor may also talk with you about other individuals or agencies that can provide or pay for a service, since VR requires that you use these other resources (comparable benefits) first.

Some of the services based on financial need and comparable benefits include:

- Medical services, such as hospital care or psychiatric treatment for a reasonable period of time
- Costs involved in post-secondary education (for example, tuition, fees, books, maintenance and transportation expenses while you are in training)
- Telecommunication, sensory and other technological aids and devices
- Tools, equipment and licenses that you will need in order to go to work

- Modifications to a vehicle, home or work site to support you in going to work
- Work adjustment training to learn appropriate work behaviors for the work place
- On-the-job training
- Other goods and services

When Financial Need is Not Considered

Some of the services that VR can provide are available without first considering your financial need. These services include:

- Evaluations and assessments
- Guidance and counseling to help you participate in your plan
- Rehabilitation engineering services to plan for equipment adaptations and devices
- Personal assistance to support you in going to work
- Sign-language interpreting services
- Foreign-language interpreting services
- Supported employment services
- Job-seeking skills training
- Job placement assistance
- Follow-up with your employer or assistance at your work site to help you keep your job

Your Individualized Plan for Employment

Your Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) reflects the partnership of you and your VR counselor in reviewing your strengths, weaknesses, interests and needs to identify your specific employment goal and how VR will assist you in reaching it.

Your plan will list the responsibilities of VR staff as well as your own responsibilities. You (or your parent or guardian) will be asked to sign your IPE. You will receive a copy.

The services listed on your IPE, or on an amendment to your IPE, cannot begin until all appropriate signatures, including yours, are on the IPE or the signature page in this handbook.

Your counselor will monitor your progress and completion of the services on your plan as you move toward successful employment.

Progress Reviews and Annual Reviews: From time to time, you and your counselor will get together to discuss your progress toward completing your IPE. It will be important for you to talk with your counselor at those times about any problems you are having with meeting your goals. Your counselor will make notes on your progress, and you will receive a copy of these notes.

Amendments to Your IPE: While you are completing your rehabilitation program, your requirements may change. This means your rehabilitation plan may also need to change. You and your counselor can talk about what needs to be changed and make those changes together with an amendment.

You (or your parent or guardian) and your counselor will sign the amendment after it is put in writing, and you will receive a copy. If services are added to your amended IPE, these services cannot be started until you sign the amendment.

A Successful Outcome

The most important part of the VR program is to assist you with finding and keeping a job. Once you've obtained employment consistent with your job goal and maintained this job for at least 90 days, you have completed your IPE.

Your counselor will contact you as you near your 90th day of successful employment to discuss closing your VR case. Once your VR case is closed, it is determined that you no longer require VR services since you are employed successfully with the adequate supports in place.

Employment Services After Your Case is Closed: In some instances, you may require further services after your case has been closed. If you feel that you require additional services after your VR case has been closed, you may contact your VR office to discuss whether post-employment services are

appropriate. If you lose your job at any time after your case has closed, and you still feel you have a disability-related barrier to employment, you are encouraged to re-apply for services. VR wants to help you to obtain and maintain employment.



An Unsuccessful Outcome

During your rehabilitation program, you may change your mind about wanting to work, or you may move to another state or not be able to complete your IPE for other reasons. Your counselor will let you know if your record is being closed for reasons other than obtaining a job.

Client Assistance Program

The Client Assistance Program (CAP) may help you resolve any concerns you have with your VR process.

A CAP representative can:

- Listen to and investigate your concern
- Help you resolve problems
- Explain your rights and responsibilities
- Explain VR policies and regulations
- Help you with the appeals process if you are dissatisfied with VR services
- Explain the appeals process
- Provide legal services to resolve rehabilitation concerns when appropriate
- Supply information about and/or refer you to other services in the community

For more information, you can call the CAP program at (919) 855-3600 (voice or TTY) or toll-free at 1-800-215-7227.

The Appeals Process

If you do not agree with a decision made by your counselor, you should first try to work out a solution with him or her. The Client Assistance Program (CAP) may be able to help you and your counselor come to an agreement. If not, you may request an appeals hearing.

Step 1 – Your Request for an Appeals Hearing

To ask for an appeals hearing, you must write a letter to the regional director for VR in your area. Your letter must include your name, address, phone number, and an explanation of the problem. If you need help, your counselor, other VR staff members or a CAP representative can help.

You must also say whether you want an administrative review (informal meeting) to discuss your case before the appeals hearing (formal hearing) or whether you want only the formal hearing. Many problems can be worked out in the informal meeting.

Step 2 – The Informal Meeting and Formal Appeals Hearing—Mediation Option

If you ask for an informal meeting, it must be held within 15 days after your written request is received. Having the informal meeting will not delay your formal hearing if it is needed. The formal hearing must be held within 45 days after the regional director receives your request. You may bring family or others concerned with your situation to either meeting.

The *informal meeting* is more of a discussion and an informal effort to solve the problem. The *formal hearing* involves the presentation of witnesses and other evidence by you and VR to an impartial hearing officer. The impartial hearing officer is not an employee of VR but must be someone who knows about VR policies. During Step 2 of the process, mediation by an impartial third party may be another option to settle the problem if both you and VR agree to it.

Step 3 – The Decision

After the formal hearing, the hearing officer will send a decision to you and the director of VR. If you or the director do not agree with the hearing officer's decision, either of you may request a review of the decision by an individual in the Office of the Secretary of the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services.

VR Regional Directors

Western Regional Director

200 Enola Road, Suite 209 • Morganton, NC 28655
(877) 472-2729 • Fax (828) 438-6439

Central Regional Director

201 Commercial Court • Sanford, NC 27330
(919) 775-4283 • Fax (919) 777-9751

Eastern Regional Director

404 St. Andrews Drive, Suite 2
Greenville, NC 27834
(252) 355-9010 • Fax (252) 355-9077

Helpful Words and Abbreviations

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): The law, and subsequent amendments, which made discrimination illegal against individuals with disabilities in employment, public accommodations, public services and telecommunications

Applicant: A person who has applied for VR services but has not yet been determined eligible for the program

Client Assistance Program (CAP): A program that can assist consumers in resolving concerns with VR services

Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP): Facility or program which may provide career assessment, assistive technology, job training, job coaching or job placement services to individuals with disabilities

Client: A person with a disability who has been determined eligible for VR services. This also includes the client's parent, guardian, advocate, or representative, when appropriate.

Informed Choice: An ongoing process and partnership with your counselor in which your counselor provides or assists you with obtaining the information you need to make choices and selections about your rehabilitation program

Individual with a Disability: An individual who has a physical, mental, learning or emotional impairment which limits one or more functional capacities related to work and who can benefit in terms of an employment outcome from receiving vocational rehabilitation services

Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE): A written plan developed by you and your VR counselor that reflects what services will be required to help you be successful in getting and keeping a job

Post-secondary Education: Education or training programs provided by colleges, universities, community colleges, technical/vocational schools or professional/trade schools

Rehabilitation Act: The law, and subsequent amendments, intended to eliminate discrimination against individuals with disabilities in: programs receiving federal funds, federal employment and employment by federal contractors

Rehabilitation Technology: Services provided by rehabilitation engineers and assistive technology specialists which can help with changes to your home, vehicle, worksite, job duties, or communications to assist you with finding or keeping a job

SSI: Supplemental Security Income

SSDI: Social Security Disability Insurance

Supported Employment: A service available which provides a job coach and long-term support to help you learn or keep your job

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR): The state program in North Carolina that is responsible for providing services that help individuals with disabilities prepare for, find and keep a job

Work Adjustment: Activities which are generally provided by a community rehabilitation program to improve productivity, attendance, punctuality, ability to work with others, ability to work under supervision and work tolerance

IPE Signature Page

All appropriate signatures are required on this signature page or my Individualized Plan for Employment before any service can begin.

I have reviewed this Individualized Plan of Employment Handbook and participated in the development of my rehabilitation plan for employment.

Client (Print): _____

Client (Sign:) _____

Date: _____

If applicable: Guardian/Representative

Print name: _____

Sign name: _____

Date: _____

Counselor (Sign): _____

Date: _____



VR Program Contacts

You are important to VR. If you have any questions, please contact your VR counselor.

My VR Counselor: _____

Phone/Email: _____

Address: _____

Name: _____

Role: _____

Phone/Email: _____

Address: _____

Name: _____

Role: _____

Phone/Email: _____

Address: _____

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2801 Mail Service Center | Raleigh, NC 27699-2801
1-919-855-3500 | 1-800-689-9090 | TTY (919) 855-3579
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State of North Carolina | Beverly Eaves Perdue, Governor
Department of Health and Human Services | Lanier M. Cansler, Secretary
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