

Handbook of Services

Your Guide to Employment





Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Wision

We will be a high performing organization focused on excellence We will focus on the needs of our customers We will exemplify the best of public service

Mission

To achieve our vision to serve individuals with disabilities, we will: Focus on results, employment and independence for individuals with disabilities and injured workers

Partner

Innovate

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 assist you.

What Is the Purpose of Vocational Rehabilitation?

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) provides services for eligible persons with physical or mental impairments. These services are designed to enable you to prepare for, obtain, keep, or regain employment.

Who Is Eligible for VR Services?

Eligibility for VR services, as determined below, is based upon the presence of a physical or mental impairment and a goal of employment.

- The physical or mental impairment constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment.
- The individual can benefit from vocational rehabilitation services in terms of an employment outcome.
- The individual requires vocational rehabilitation services to prepare for, obtain, keep, or regain employment.

If you are receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for your disability, you are presumed eligible for VR services if you intend to secure employment.

An eligibility decision will be made within 60 days after you apply for services, unless circumstances prevent such a decision or you are involved in trial work or an extended evaluation to help determine your eligibility.

What Is Order of Selection?

The purpose of an Order of Selection is to provide a fair and orderly way of determining the order in which individuals with disabilities are served by VR. This is important when the VR agency cannot serve all individuals with disabilities who apply for services. Order of selection establishes categories to which individuals are assigned based on the significance of disability. Federal law requires that individuals with the most significant disabilities are served first.

Once VR is able to serve an individual's needs, an individualized plan for employment (IPE) will be developed and implemented. Until that time, all eligible individuals will remain on a waiting list.

Florida VR uses the following three order of selection category definitions:

Category 1 Most Significant – An eligible individual with a disability which seriously limits three or more functional capacities in terms of 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 which seriously limits one or two functional capacities in terms of work and requires two or more primary services over a period of at least 6 months or; an individual who receives SSDI or SSI based on his or her own disability.

Category 3 - An eligible Individual with a disability which does not seriously limit a functional capacity in terms of work and/or services are expected to last less than 6 months.

If you are determined eligible for the program, your counselor will discuss with you your category assignment, the waiting list and referral to other resources that may benefit you.

What is Financial Participation?

You may be required to participate in the cost of certain VR services. Your counselor will review your financial information to determine what percentage you may have to contribute toward the cost of your planned VR services.

If you meet the exemption status, you will not be required to participate in the cost of your VR services (for example, a SSDI or SSI recipient based on your disability or persons without an income). Your counselor will discuss other exemptions with you during your initial visit.

Financial participation criteria will apply to all services except:

- Assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs
- Vocational rehabilitation counseling and guidance
- Referral and other services to assist individuals in securing services from other agencies
- Job-related services including job search and placement assistance
- Personal assistance services
- Any auxiliary aid or service, such as interpreters for the deaf
- Supported employment services
- Trial work services
- On-the-job training
- Community-Based Work Experience for transition school to work

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?

The Social Security Administration (SSA) is sending Ticket to Work certificates (tickets) to Floridians who receive SSA benefits. These tickets may be taken to Employment Network (EN) participants such as the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation where you will have access to employment and rehabilitation services necessary to help you get a job. The program is voluntary.

Informed Choice

Informed choice, or choosing based on information, is at the center of Florida's vocational rehabilitation process. These choices include who your counselor will be, what services you receive, who provides the services, and what job you attain.

Every person applying for VR services will receive guidance, counseling, and information from a counselor who understands disabilities and how they affect employment. The relationship between you and your VR counselor is an important one. In some parts of Florida, you may choose to work with a counselor from a private community rehabilitation program or a state VR counselor. Whichever applies in your case, it is important for you to work closely with your chosen counselor. Information will be provided to you regarding this choice at the time of your application for services. If you are not satisfied with your choice of a counselor, you may request a change at any time.

Vocational rehabilitation involves making choices about your employment outcome, services needed to reach your employment goal, 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 the Steps to Rehabilitation?

The rehabilitation process involves a series of steps that will assist you to prepare for, obtain, and keep a job which is 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. You may call 1-800-451-4327 to obtain the phone number and address of the VR office closest to you.

Step Two: Evaluation

Your counselor is interested in finding out what can be done to help you get work or determine what might be blocking your ability to get work. Any medical, educational, or other reports you have would be helpful in this process. If current information is not available, your VR counselor will help you choose the providers of any necessary evaluations at no cost to you. The evaluation will indicate whether there is treatment or other forms of assistance needed to help support your efforts to obtain employment. Upon completion of this phase, an eligibility determination will be made. If you are determined eligible for VR services, you will be placed in the appropriate Order of Selection category, and you will be automatically placed on the state waiting list.

Step Three: Rehabilitation Planning

When your case is ready to be processed from the waiting list, your counselor will work with you to develop a plan called the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). Your IPE will include your chosen goal, the VR services you will receive, and the amount of your financial participation in the IPE services, if any. A signed copy of the IPE will also be given to you for your records. If you choose to develop your own IPE, your counselor will provide you with written information. This

information will include the required parts of the IPE and the options available to you for developing your plan. Your counselor is available to assist you in developing all or part of your IPE. Your plan must be agreed to and signed by both you and your counselor.

The IPE process can take up to 120 days to develop a vocational plan with the necessary services.

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 can be provided, depending on your needs.

- Counseling and Guidance
- Medical and Psychological Diagnosis
- Rehabilitation technology to assist in your evaluation, rehabilitation, and employment goal
- Vocational Evaluation
- Career Planning
- Medical and Psychological Restoration
- Training and Education
- Interpreter services, telecommunications, and other technological aids
- Books, occupational tools, occupational licenses, equipment, and other training material
- Transportation and vehicle modification the most economical modes of transportation will be used for securing your rehabilitation services and occupational goal
- Referral to appropriate community agencies
- Job Placement
- On the job training

The types of services and the setting you choose will be two of the most important decisions you may make during your planned program. These are decisions made by you and your counselor based on your needs, abilities, and the types of services available in your community.

Step Five: Job Placement

When you are ready for employment, your VR counselor will assist with finding job openings in your community. He or she can give you ideas and advice on filling out applications and interviewing for particular jobs and, with your approval, work with an employer to modify the job site and provide assistive devices to meet your needs. Your active involvement in job placement is important to successful employment. After you begin work, your VR counselor will want to make sure that you and your employer are satisfied and may 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 VR counselor will discuss ending the counselor's active participation in your rehabilitation. Before doing that, however, it must be determined that you no longer need VR services. If you need additional assistance to maintain your job, VR can provide postemployment services without the need to reapply.

Who Is the Ombudsman?

You have the option to discuss your individual case with an Ombudsman. The VR Ombudsman will assist you in resolving your client-services needs. This is an impartial service available to VR applicants and eligible individuals who have questions, concerns, or feel they may have been treated unfairly. The Ombudsman receives, investigates, and assists in resolving complaints. You may contact the Ombudsman at 1-800-451-4327 (Voice/TDD).

What Are Your Responsibilities?

- Maintain regular communication with your VR counselor throughout your rehabilitation program. Provide and maintain your current address and phone numbers so that contact can be made when you are released from the waiting list.
- Provide your counselor with access to information and records that are available to assist in determining your eligibility for the program and necessary services.
- Advise your counselor of any appointment or service that you want VR to sponsor prior to participating.
- Actively participate in developing your IPE by making choices, needs, and interests known to your counselor. If at any time you find that your program needs to change, you should discuss this with your counselor.
- Make every effort to seek additional sources of funding for your rehabilitation. Some possible sources are Supplemental Security Income, Social Security Disability Insurance, Ticket to Work services under the Work Incentives Improvement Act as amended in 1999, Medicare, Medicaid, other insurance, public assistance, and educational scholarships and grants.
- ♦ Be on time and follow through with all appointments. When this is not possible, you should notify your VR 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.
- Fulfill your obligations outlined in your IPE.
- Choose an employment goal with your counselor's assistance that is based on labor market demographics and information.

What Are Your Rights?

As a VR customer, you have the following:

Confidentiality

Florida law allows VR to obtain medical and/or psychological information from doctors or other professionals after asking for and obtaining your written permission. This information is requested only to assist your counselor in determining your eligibility and to determine the vocational rehabilitation services necessary for your employment. All information discussed with and given to your VR counselor is confidential. VR will discuss or release information about you only with your written consent as required by law or under the following circumstances:

- VR electronically exchanges customer information with the Social Security Administration. 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 vocational rehabilitation 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) when you have requested assistance from CAP.
- 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 when you do not agree with a decision or if there is a problem which you are unable to resolve with your counselor. You are strongly encouraged to express your concern first to your VR counselor, to a VR supervisor, or the Ombudsman who can resolve most problems that arise. 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 VR Area Director requesting an Administrative Review of your case. To locate the appropriate Area Director, please refer to the listing on the inside back cover of this handbook. 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 a Fair Hearing (Impartial Due Process 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 a Fair Hearing.

To request a Fair Hearing, you must write to:

State Director Division of Vocational Rehabilitation 2002 Old Saint Augustine Road, Building A Tallahassee, Florida 32301-4862

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

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

If you request a Fair Hearing, mediation may be available. If you wish to attempt to resolve your Fair Hearing through mediation, please say so in your letter requesting a Fair Hearing. If the mediation is not successful, the Fair Hearing process will continue. If you need advice, assistance, or an explanation of your rights, you may contact the Client Assistance Program at 850-488-9071.

What Is the Client Assistance Program (CAP)?

The CAP, Advocacy Center for Persons with Disabilities, Inc., was established to help with any problems related to services provided by VR.

Client Assistance Program 2728 Centerview Drive, Suite 102 Tallahassee, Florida 32301 PHONE: 850-488-9071 FAX: 850-488-8640 Toll-Free: 800-342-0823 (Voice) 800-346-4127 (TTY)

For further information on CAP services, you may visit their web site at www.advocacycenter.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 the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, you may file a complaint within 180 days from the date of the alleged violation with either:

Florida Department of Education Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Office for Civil Rights (OCR)

Office of the Ombudsman 2002 Old Saint Augustine Road, Building A Tallahassee, Florida 32301 Phone: 800-451-4327 (Voice/TDD)

U.S. Department of Education

Atlanta Office 61 Forsyth Street, Suite 19-T-70 Atlanta, Georgia 30303-3104 Phone: 404-562-6350 TDD: 877-521-2172 e-mail: OCR.Atlanta@ed.gov

YOUR SATISFACTION IS **IMPORTANT TO DVR**

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 further assist VR in maintaining a quality rehabilitation program for Florida.

What Are VR State Plan					
Public Forums?					

Annually, Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) updates its plan for providing services to people with disabilities. This State Plan is submitted to the federal government. VR conducts public forums throughout the state each year to give VR customers and others an opportunity to comment on its policies and procedures contained in the plan.

The goal of the VR State Plan Forums is to obtain input from VR customers, staff, and the public about:

- What are the vocational rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities in regard to employment, and
- How VR can provide quality services to help individuals with disabilities obtain and retain employment.

Your input is very important to help the division provide quality VR services to individuals with disabilities. To obtain dates and locations of VR State Plan Forums, please contact your counselor, or call 1-800-451-4327, or visit the VR web site at <u>www.RehabWorks.org.</u> Your participation is important and encouraged.



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

Acknowledgment

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

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

Customer's Signature

Date

Customer's Signature

Date

Thank you.

Customer Copy

Appointments				
Date	Time	Person	Address	Phone Number

Vocational Rehabilitation Area Administrative Offices

Area I

Brenda Moorer Area Director 4700 Bayou Blvd, Bldg. 2C Pensacola, Florida 32503 Phone: 850-494-7200 Fax: 850-494-7227

Area II

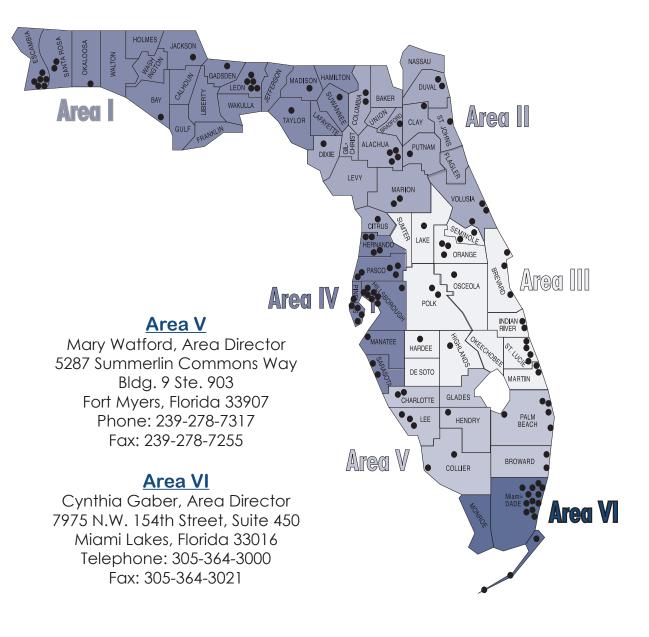
Lydia Bush, Area Director 1389 US Hwy 90 West Lake City, Florida 32055 Phone: 386-754-1675 Fax: 386-754-1269

Area III

Wayne Olson, Area Director 3555 Maguire Boulevard Bennington Bldg., Suite 205 Orlando, Florida 32803 Phone: 407-897-2725 Fax: 407-897-2752

Area IV

Mary Pierce, Area Director 1313 North Tampa Street Suite 801 Tampa, Florida 33602 Phone: 866-903-3610 Fax: 813-233-3646





Visit VR Online at <u>www.RehabWorks.org</u> www.FLJobConnections.com

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.

Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. All voice telephone numbers on this document may be reached by persons using TTY/TDD equipment via the Florida Relay Service at 711.

Revised 8/08