



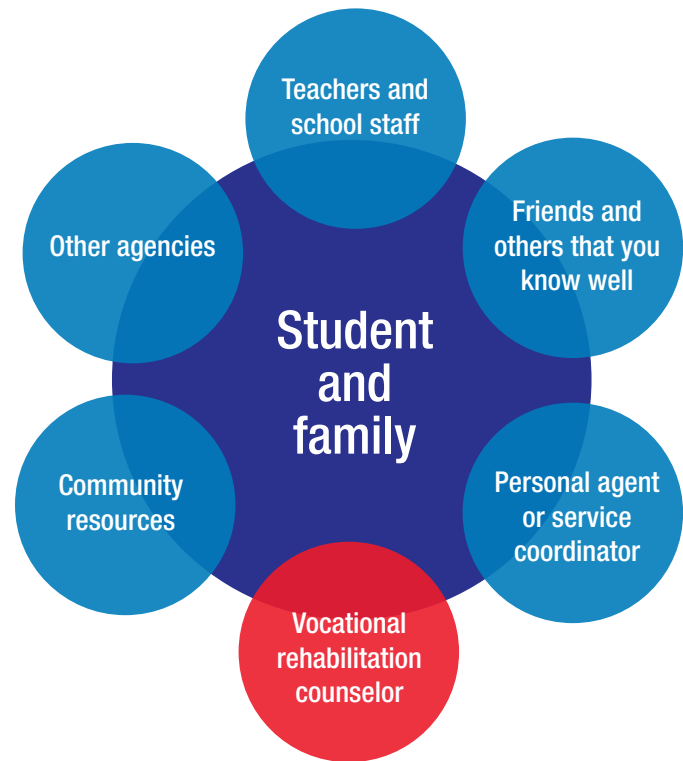
Section 7: Vocational Rehabilitation services

Section overview

- Getting Vocational Rehabilitation services
- VR employment services
- New pre-employment transition services
- Your responsibilities
- Your rights
- Problem solving
- Resources

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program (VR) is a state and federally funded resource for people with disabilities. It is housed within the Department of Human Services. VR can help you explore your career interests, and find and keep a job you like.

In the following section, you will learn how to get vocational rehabilitation (VR) services (Figure 6) and the types of services you may receive if you are eligible. You may have already begun this process if you are working with a VR counselor during your transition.



Getting Vocational Rehabilitation services

VR can start working with you as young as 14 to assess your skills and decide the accommodations you may need to work. When you turn 17, VR can begin the intake process. Following is the process to get VR services:

- 1. Contact your local VR office to schedule an orientation appointment.** You may receive a Personal Information Form in the mail. If so, bring your completed form to your first appointment. You will find a link to local VR offices in Resources.
- 2. Attend an orientation meeting** (either in a group or one-to-one) to learn how VR services work, ask questions and decide whether you want to apply for services.
- 3. Attend an intake interview and apply for VR services.** A VR counselor will meet with you for about an hour to learn about you, your disability and your career interests. During this meeting, you will complete a one-page application form to apply for VR services. You may also complete any needed release forms for your school, medical and other records. Your records help determine whether you are eligible for VR services.

Note: You can speed up the eligibility process by bringing requested materials to your first appointment. Be sure to ask what documentation you need; examples include your facilitated person-centered plan or one-page profile, documentation of your disability from school and medical records.

- 4. Request benefits counseling.** It is an important service to help you understand how earned income may affect your Social Security and Medicaid benefits. You need this information to make the best decision. We recommend you request benefits counseling if it is not offered to you early in the VR process.
- 5. Your eligibility for VR services is determined.** Eligibility can take 60 days or longer. Bring copies of your personal records to speed up the process.
- 6. Set a job goal.** You and your VR counselor will set a job goal that fits with your talents and interests. Your counselor can help with this and research jobs that would be a good match.



7. **Sign your individual plan for employment.** You and your counselor will write your plan for employment (IPE). It describes the steps you will take to meet your job goal. Your IPE must be signed within 90 days of eligibility.
8. **Work with an employment specialist or job developer** to help you find a job that matches your talents and interests.
9. **VR follows up and closes your case.** After you are in your job for at least 90 days and all is going well, VR will close your case. You can ask for post-employment services if you need more help to keep your current job, get a new job or advance in your career.

VR employment services

VR offers a variety of services to help people with disabilities prepare for, get and keep jobs. The services you use depend on your individual circumstances.

Assessment services measure your strengths, capabilities, work skills and interests. These services help you select a job goal and the VR services you need to reach it.

Counseling and guidance help you make informed decisions about how to reach your goals.

Independent living skills address barriers to employment. For example, you may learn more about taking care of yourself, how to best manage your money and use community transportation.

Assistive technology is low- or high-tech devices (like switches or computer software) to help you communicate or complete work tasks.

Training provides you with work skills needed to achieve your employment goal.

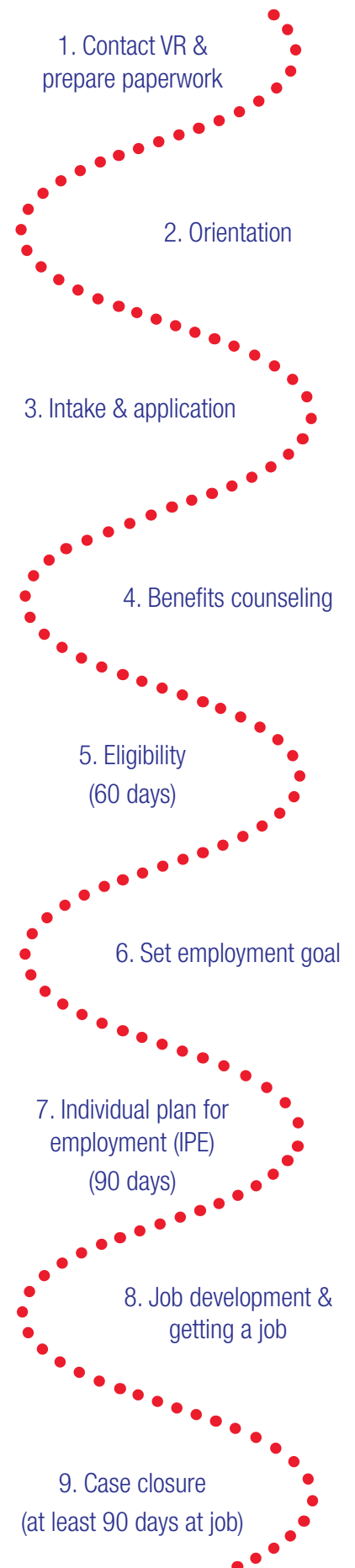
Job placement services include help with application forms, developing a resume, practicing interview skills, identifying job leads, keeping your new job, and working with your employer to get the disability accommodations you need.

New pre-employment transition services

In July 2014, the U.S. Congress passed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to help people with disabilities secure good jobs and advance in their careers. WIOA affects many agencies that provide employment services to people with disabilities, including state education and VR agencies. The act requires that local school districts and VR agencies work together to make “pre-employment transition services” available to students with disabilities. These services include:

- Job exploration counseling;
- Work-based learning experiences, which may include in-school or after-school opportunities, or experience outside the traditional school setting (including internships);

Figure 6. Steps to VR services



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- Help to enroll in colleges or universities;
- Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living; and
- Instruction in speaking up for yourself.

The Oregon Office of VR and the Department of Education are collaborating to make these services available soon.

Your responsibilities

Below is a list of your responsibilities as a VR customer. Following through on your responsibilities can help you get the most out of your experience.

- Communicate openly with your counselor, including discussing your concerns, interests and goals.
- Maintain records of discussions with VR and all the paperwork you receive.
- Keep your counselor informed of changes in your circumstances.
- Ask questions when you do not understand.
- Use the problem-solving options listed below when you do not agree with an action about your VR services.

Your rights

You also have rights in your services. You have the right to:

- Know if you are eligible for VR services within 60 days of applying;
- Understand the process and how decisions are made;
- Participate in assessments and developing your IPE;
- A written copy of your IPE and all decisions;
- Review of your IPE once a year;
- Administrative review of decisions you disagree with;
- Mediation of disagreements.

Problem solving

If at any time you are unhappy with a decision or action regarding your VR services, you have several ways to resolve the problem.

- Discuss the problem with your counselor or the VR branch manager.
- Call the Client Assistance Program (CAP) housed within Disability Rights Oregon at **1-800-452-1694**. CAP offers information, advice and advocacy to help you resolve problems.
- Call **1-877-277-0513** to ask the VR dispute resolution coordinator for an administrative review. This is an informal meeting with a VR staff member who has not worked on your case.
- Submit a written request for mediation services using the Request for Mediation Services Form within 30 days of the decision or action that you do not like.
- Submit a written request for a hearing using the Impartial Hearing Request Form within 60 days. During the hearing, a hearings officer will listen to evidence and make a decision.



Resources

VR local offices

www.oregon.gov/dhs/vr/Pages/vr-offices.aspx

Referral, application and eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services, OAR 582-050-0000

http://arcweb.sos.state.or.us/pages/rules/oars_500/oar_582/582_050.html

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, 2014

www.doleta.gov/WIOA/

WIA is now WIOA: what the new bill means for people with disabilities

www.communityinclusion.org/article.php?article_id=382

VR dispute resolution

www.oregon.gov/dhs/vr/pages/dispute_resolution.aspx

Oregon Client Assistance Program

<http://droregon.org/employment/>

Mediation Request Form

www.oregon.gov/dhs/vr/publications/mediation-request.pdf

Impartial Hearing Request Form

www.oregon.gov/dhs/vr/publications/hearing-request.pdf