



Job Placement



Further Education



Career Awareness



Career Counseling

Getting a Head Start With Vocational Rehabilitation

A Guide to Applying for VR Services
2019



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Introduction

Choosing a career is a big decision. Finding the right job is challenging. Keeping a job and being promoted at work may be tough for anyone. People with disabilities can face added challenges on their employment path.

The foundation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is that all people who want to work should have the opportunity, including people with disabilities.

In Tennessee, The Division of Rehabilitation Services, a part of the Department of Human Services supports people with disabilities in getting jobs. Most people in the disability community refer to this as Vocational Rehabilitation or VR.

To help you prepare to apply for VR services, The Arc Tennessee, Disability Rights Tennessee, Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Tennessee Department of Education's Division of Special Education have created this booklet.



Order of Selection and Priority Categories

By federal law, VR must serve individuals with the most significant disabilities first. When there is not enough money for VR to serve everyone eligible for services, they must use an Order of Selection.

Order of Selection means that VR put eligible applicants into Priority Categories based on the severity of their disabilities and the amount of services they need. When an Order of Selection must be used, those who qualify in certain Priority Categories will receive services first.

To qualify in Priority Category 1 or 2, the person's disability must cause limitations in two or more "functional capacities" as defined by VR policy:

- Mobility
- Communication
- Work Skills
- Work Tolerance
- Self-Care
- Self-Direction
- Interpersonal Skills
- Cognitive Skills
- Motor Skills

RIGHTS

1. You have the right to know if you are eligible within 60 days of when you apply. 34 CFR §361.41
2. You have the right to develop your own Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). 34 CFR §361.45
3. You have the right to get the VR services you need to help you reach your job goal. 34 CFR §361.48
4. You have the right to decide what your job goal will be. CFR 34 §361.45 and §361.52
5. Your IPE must be developed within 90 days after you are found eligible. 29 USC §722(b)(3)(f)
6. You have the right to pick services and providers (schools, etc.). 34 CFR §361.45 and §361.52
7. You have the right to change your IPE, your job goal, or services. 34 CFR §361.45
8. You have the right to review your IPE at least once a year. 34 CFR §361.45
9. You have the right to review the VR Policy Manual. TCA § 10-7-503(a)(1)(A)(i)
10. You have the right to appeal any decision made by VR that you do not agree with, including eligibility. 34 CFR §361.57
11. You have the right to have the Client Assistance Program (CAP) help you. 34 CFR §361.57

* All rights are in the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 34, Part 361, State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program. Copy of the regulations: <https://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/34/part-361>



School Counselors and VR Counselors can help match the training/schools to the person. Explore colleges and universities; Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology (TCAT); and Tennessee Rehabilitation Center (TRC). Tennessee's Inclusive Higher Education Programs: Vanderbilt's Next Steps, Lipscomb University's IDEAL, Union University's EDGE, the University of Memphis' Tiger LIFE, and the University of Tennessee's FUTURE.

A VR Counselor can help schedule a tour at TRC in Smyrna. There are Community TRCs around the state.

The Individualized Plan for Employment

The VR Counselor can help the client learn what job they want and the skills and training they need for the job.

The VR Counselor will guide the client through activities to identify abilities and job interests to develop their Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). This plan will name the job the client wants, training, and services needed to get the job.

The VR Counselor can discuss self-employment options if that is an interest.

It is up to the client to visit training providers to find a good fit. The VR Counselor will help the client make a decision based on interests, what the client does well, and work interests.



Tips

1. If the school does not connect a person with a disability to VR, they can call VR directly.
2. Ask your school to connect you with VR.
3. Before meeting with the VR Counselor consider types of work enjoyed. VR helps find *paid jobs*. Any training received must be needed to reach the job goal.
4. If a person is on a waiting list for employment services, ask the VR Counselor about options.
5. Once the IPE is signed, the VR client must stay in monthly touch with their VR Counselor. Phone messages and emails are okay.
6. The VR Counselor must approve all changes to an IPE.
7. For information on “Ticket to Work” visit: <https://www.ssa.gov/work/>
8. Applicants and clients need to tell their VR Counselor the best way to contact them (e.g. text, email).



9. The VR Counselor needs to know if applicants need information in another format (e.g. Braille, Spanish).
10. When receiving VR services, contact your VR Counselor if you think you have a problem.
11. If you have a rough semester, do not give up. Your VR Counselor has ideas to help and support you.
12. When getting training, such as college, do not drop a class you without speaking with your VR Counselor.
13. Connect with the Student Support Services or Disability Services office where you get postsecondary education or job training. They can help you get needed supports and services (e.g. tutors and note takers).
14. Follow rules where you are getting training.
15. VR may close your case if you:
 - Have completed your IPE and have kept your job for 90 days;
 - Do not cooperate or maintain contact with your VR Counselor; or
 - Ask for your case to be closed
16. Do not expect others to look out for your rights. Ask questions to get answers. You can take someone with you to your VR meetings. If someone at VR tells you no, ask for the policy the refusal is based on. You have rights.

Some Things to Think About Before Applying for VR

To prepare to meet a VR Counselor, it helps to know what kind of work is interesting and what is disliked. The job goal is how we earn our own money. This is the start of a career.

Thinking about What you Enjoy

1. Activities really enjoyed
2. Activities that are okay
3. Preferred Activities
4. Disliked Activities

Work Interests

1. Work you enjoy doing. Ask for help if you needed.
2. List work or volunteer experiences. Not all work has been paid.
3. The Occupational Outlook Handbook is a guide for skills and training needed for jobs:
<http://www.careeronestop.org/ExploreCareers/explore-careers.aspx>.
4. Who do you know who has jobs you may like? Talk with them about their work.
5. Look at jobs: <https://www.jobs4tn.gov/>. What looks interesting? Why? This website can be difficult to understand. Think about who to ask for help if you need it.

Planning for Paid Work

1. What things do I do best?
2. What education have I finished?
3. What type of job training have I had?
4. What work have I done?
5. What volunteer work have I done?
6. What kinds of work am I interested in? Why?
8. What work do I NOT want to do? Why?
9. Do I need health insurance?
10. Do I need training to do the job I want? If I do, what type of training?
11. Do I want to work a full-time job?
12. Do I want to work a part-time job?

Dislikes

1. Sound or quiet needed
2. Temperature needed to work
1. Time of the day to work
4. Prefer to work in groups or alone
5. Other

VR Regional Offices: https://www.tn.gov/content/tn/humanservices/ds/office-locator-trc-ttap.html	
<p><u>Region 1</u> 2557 Plymouth Road Johnson City, Tennessee 37605 Phone: (423) 434-6934 TTY: (423) 434-6899 Counties & TRCs Served: Carter, Greene, Hancock, Hawkins, Johnson, Sullivan, Unicoi, Washington</p>	<p><u>Region 2</u> 520 West Summit Hill Drive, Suite 301 Knoxville, TN 37902 Phone: (865) 594-6060 TTY: (865) 594-6006 Counties & TRCs Served: Anderson, Blount, Campbell, Claiborne, Knox, Loudon, Monroe, Morgan, Roane, Scott, Sevier, Union, Cocke, Grainger, Hamblen, Jefferson</p>
<p><u>Region 3</u> Eastgate Center, Suite 602-B 5600 Brainerd Road Chattanooga, TN 37411 Phone: (423) 634-6700 TTY: (423) 634-6717 Counties & TRCs Served: Bledsoe, Bradley, Grundy, Hamilton, Marion, McMinn, Meigs, Polk, Rhea, Sequatchie</p>	<p><u>Region 4</u> 955 E. 20th Street Cookeville, TN 38501 Phone: (931) 526-9783 TTY: (931) 525-6622 Counties & TRCs Served: Cannon, Clay, Cumberland, DeKalb, Fentress, Jackson, Macon, Overton, Picket, Putnam, Smith, Van Buren, Warren, White</p>
<p><u>Region 5</u> 1000 2nd Avenue North Nashville, TN 37203 Phone/TTY: (615) 741-1606 Counties & TRCs Served: Davidson, Robertson, Sumner, Trousdale, Wilson, Rutherford, Williamson, Cheatham, Dickson, Humphreys, Houston, Steward, Montgomery</p>	<p><u>Region 6</u> 206 Wayne Street Columbia, TN 38401 Phone/TTY: (931) 380-2563 Counties & TRCs Served: Bedford, Giles, Hickman, Lawrence, Lewis, Lincoln, Marshall, Maury, Perry, Wayne, Coffee, Moore, Franklin</p>
<p><u>Region 7</u> 225 Martin Luther King Boulevard Second Floor, Tower A Jackson, TN 38301 Phone: (731) 423-5620 TTY: (731) 423-5625 Counties & TRCs Served: Chester, Decatur, Hardeman, Hardin, Haywood, Henderson, Madison, McNairy</p>	<p><u>Region 8</u> 1108 Tyson Avenue Paris, TN 38242-3444 Phone: (731)644-7361 Counties & TRCs Served: Benton, Carroll, Crockett, Dyer, Gibson, Henry, Lake, Obion, Weakley</p>
<p><u>Region 9</u> 1 Commerce Square, DHS/DVR, 40 South Main Street, 10th Floor, Suite 1000, Memphis, TN 38103 Phone/TTY: (901) 528-5284 Counties & TRCs Served: Shelby, Fayette, Tipton, Lauderdale</p>	
<p><u>Region 10</u> Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired 520 West Summit Hill Drive, Suite 301, Knoxville, TN 37902 Phone/TTY: (865) 594-6861; All Counties Served</p>	
<p><u>Region 11</u> Services for the Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing 520 West Summit Hill Drive, Suite 301, Knoxville, TN 37902 Phone/TTY: (865) 594-6861; All Counties Served</p>	

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615/248-5878 or 800/835-7077

545 Mainstream Drive, Suite 100, Nashville, TN 37228

<http://www.thearctn.org/>

Client Assistance Program (CAP), a Program of Disability Rights Tennessee

800/342-1660; 615/298-1080 (TDD); 888/852-2852 (TTY)

2 International Plaza, Suite 825, Nashville, TN 37217

<http://www.disabilityrightstn.org>

Tennessee Department of Human Services, Division of Rehabilitation Services (VR)

615/313-4891; 615/ 313-5695 (TTY); 800/270-1349 (TTY Long Distance)

400 Deaderick Street, 12th Floor, Nashville, TN 37243

<https://www.tn.gov/humanservices/ds/vocational-rehabilitation.html>

Tennessee Department of Education, Division of Special Populations, Special Education

(615) 741-3834

710 James Robertson Parkway, 11th Floor, Nashville, TN 37243

<https://www.tn.gov/education/student-support/special-education.html>

