

**The Texas Department of Assistive  
and Rehabilitative Services**

**Division for Rehabilitation Services**

**Vocational  
Rehabilitation Program**

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**A Guide**

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**for**

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**Applicants**

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**What to expect**



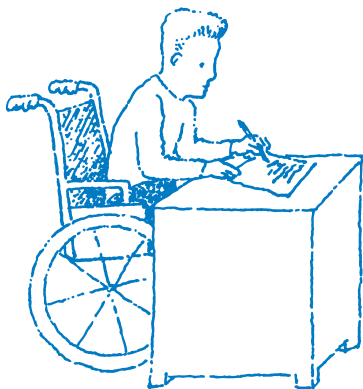
**How it works for you**



**What part you play**

## **What Is Vocational Rehabilitation?**

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services help people with disabilities prepare for, find, and keep jobs. The Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services is the state agency responsible for the delivery of the vocational rehabilitation program in Texas. Within that department is the Division for Rehabilitation Services (DRS). This Division provides VR services. A person may be found eligible for services depending upon his or her individual needs. You will be helped to make informed choices of services, service providers and an employment goal.



## **How Do I Apply?**

To apply for VR services, call, write or visit the Division for Rehabilitation Services (DRS) office nearest you and request an appointment to meet with a counselor. Please let us know if you need translator services or other accommodations for your appointment. If you need help in locating a DRS office in your area, you may call 1(800) 628-5115.

## **Do I Need To Bring Anything With Me When I Apply For Services?**

When you meet with your counselor, bring a photo identification (for example, driver's license, state issued ID, school ID, passport or military ID) and your Social Security number. It will be helpful if you also have:

- ◆ your home address as well as your mailing address;
- ◆ names and addresses of any doctors you have seen recently;
- ◆ names and addresses of any schools you have attended;
- ◆ information about any medical insurance you have;
- ◆ a list of places you have worked including type of job, dates, reason left and salary;
- ◆ proof of income information for you and your spouse or your parents (if they claim you as a dependent on their federal income tax) for example, a copy of last pay stub, SSI/SSDI or VA award letter, workers' compensation Notice of Payment, last income tax return, etc.;
- ◆ proof of expenses related to monthly mortgage/rental payments, prescribed diets, debts imposed by court order, medical costs and disability related expenses;
- ◆ names, addresses and phone numbers of two people who will know how to contact you;
- ◆ any reports of recent medical exams, school records, or other information which you feel may help the counselor understand your disability.

At this time, your counselor will explain DRS and VR services and will ask you:

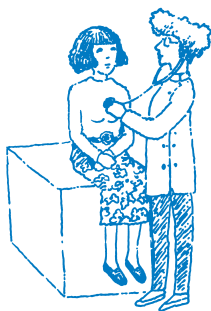
- ◆ to explain how your disability makes it hard for you to work;
- ◆ how do you think we can help you go to work?

All records and information are kept strictly confidential.

## **What Happens After I Have Finished The Application?**

Your counselor will want to learn more about you through one or more of the following ways:

- ◆ getting information from your doctors and schools;
- ◆ sending you to a new doctor to find out about your current medical condition;
- ◆ having you take some tests to find out more about your interests, abilities, and skills.



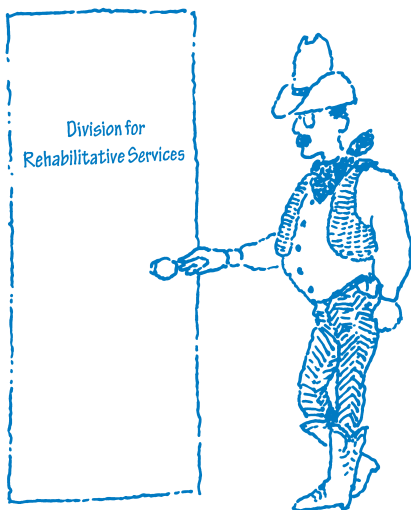
Your counselor will make the appointments for you. You won't have to pay for these appointments.

**It is very important that you keep all appointments. Please let your counselor know if you can't make it to one. If you miss an appointment, it may take much longer for you to get services.**

## Does Everyone Who Applies Get Served?

No, in order to get services, you must:

- ◆ be in Texas;
- ◆ have a physical and/or mental condition that affects your ability to work;
- ◆ be able to get and keep a job after receiving services;
- ◆ need services in order to help you get and keep a job; and
- ◆ recipients of social security disability benefits (supplemental security income (SSI) or social security disability insurance (SSDI)) are presumed eligible for vocational rehabilitation services.



## Who Decides If I Can Get Vocational Rehabilitation Services?

After reviewing all of the facts, your counselor decides if you can be served in the vocational rehabilitation program. If the decision is “YES,” you will become a VR client. As a client, you play a very important role in helping us to help you reach your goal.

However, if your counselor tells you that VR can't help, your case file will be closed and you will receive a letter telling you why... and what actions you can take if you don't agree. You may be sent to other programs or agencies, which may be able to help you.



## What Kind Of Services Are Available?

Services might include vocational training, counseling, surgery, artificial arms and legs, hearing aids, transportation, interpreter services for people with hearing impairments, supports for individuals with cognitive impairments and help in finding a job. You probably won't need all of these services. You will only get those services that will help you reach your goal.

Services will be determined through informed client choice that is, after providing you with information about your options and alternatives.



## What Is The Plan?

If you are found eligible for vocational rehabilitation services, the next step will be to develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) that will contain your employment goal; the services you need to reach the goal and additional information.

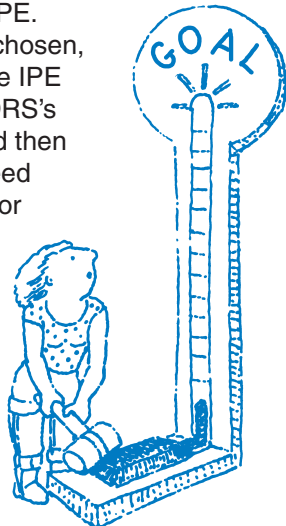
Your Division for Rehabilitation Services counselor is available to assist you in completing all or part of an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).

You have options for developing your IPE. You may develop all or part of the IPE either:

- ◆ with the assistance of your DRS counselor
- ◆ without assistance
- ◆ with a qualified vocational rehabilitation counselor not employed by DRS
- ◆ with another resource outside of DRS

DRS will not pay a fee to assist in the development of the IPE.

Whichever option is chosen, the information for the IPE will be entered into DRS's computer system and then a printed copy will need to be signed by you, or your representative, and approved by your DRS counselor.





## What Are The Components Of My IPE?

- ◆ The employment goal.
- ◆ A list of steps needed to achieve the employment goal, for example, complete training.
- ◆ How often you and your counselor will contact each other, for example, every 60 days.
- ◆ Criteria that will be used to evaluate your progress, for example, medical reports.
- ◆ A description of services needed for you to achieve your employment goal including the start and end dates of each service, the service providers, and how the service will be obtained.
- ◆ A statement about how you were involved in choosing the employment goal, services, service providers and methods for providing the services
- ◆ Your responsibilities in achieving the employment goal, for example, apply for financial aid.
- ◆ A list of other organizations that you will be responsible for applying to and for using their services, for example, a VA Hospital.
- ◆ The amount that you may be required to contribute toward the cost of services if your net income and/or assets exceed DRS's basic living requirement.
- ◆ Statements about the terms and conditions for services from DRS and your right to appeal decisions made by your counselor.
- ◆ Signatures: You or your representative and your DRS counselor.



## **I'll Need To Participate In The Cost Of Service... Won't I?**

Eligibility for VR services is not dependent on amount of income or liquid assets. However, individuals whose net income or liquid assets exceed DRS's basic living requirements (BLR) must participate in the cost of services, unless an exception has been granted by the area manager. Also, individuals who are receiving social security disability benefits are not required to participate in the cost of services. Your counselor will request proof of income and expenses from you and/or your parents, if they claim you on their income taxes. You must disclose income, liquid assets and expenses. Failure to provide complete and accurate financial information is a violation of Texas law and may result in a denial or delay of services.

All services are subject to required participation except:

- ◆ services paid or reimbursed by a source other than DRS;
- ◆ assessments for determining eligibility and determining vocational rehabilitation needs, including any associated maintenance and transportation;
- ◆ counseling, guidance, and referral provided by DRS staff;
- ◆ job related services;
- ◆ personal assistant services;
- ◆ auxiliary aids (except hearing aids) or services, for example, interpreter services, reader services and translator services.

## How Is My Participation Determined?

The net income and liquid assets of the following individuals are used in determining required participation in the cost of services:

- ◆ your parent (or foster parents, legal guardian, or conservator) if you are claimed as a dependent for purposes of federal income taxes;
- ◆ you and your spouse.

Each month in which DRS pays for goods and/or services, the person with monthly net income and/or liquid assets more than the amount listed in the BLR table (plus the allowable additions) must pay an amount equal to the excess.

Before DRS pays for services, the person with net income and/or liquid assets more than the amount listed in the BLR table must pay an amount equal to the excess.

Your portion of the cost of services may be paid “in kind.” For example, you may pay the additional cost associated with transportation to receive services or pay for needed uniforms, textbooks, etc.



## Basic Living Requirements (BLR) Table

No. of Persons*	Monthly Net Income	Liquid Assets
1	\$1,021	\$7,147
2	\$1,375	\$9,625
3	\$1,729	\$12,103
4	\$2,083	\$14,581
5	\$2,438	\$17,066
6	\$2,792	\$19,544
7	\$3,146	\$22,022
8	\$3,500	\$24,500

9 or more: *for each extra person, add...\$354 to monthly net income, and \$2,478 to liquid assets.*

Add to the Basic Living Requirements the monthly costs of the following items:

- ◆ monthly home mortgage or rental payments;
- ◆ prescribed diets and medicines used by you;
- ◆ debts imposed by court order;
- ◆ medical costs and disability related expenses.



\* Who depend on Income and Liquid Assets

## **After I Reach My Work Goal, Then What?**

When you are working and things appear to be going well, you will receive a letter letting you know that your case has been closed. You are an important part of the work force and can be proud of what you have done. Later, if you run into some problems, let your counselor know.

## **But ... What If I Have A Problem?**

There may be times when you don't understand or agree with the decisions made about your case. Perhaps you have a concern about the types of services that you are getting. Or, maybe you think you should be able to get services when you've been told that you can't.

At times like these, the best thing to do is to talk with your DRS counselor about your concerns.



## What Can I Do If I Disagree With My Counselor's Decision?

After you talk with your counselor and you still don't agree, you may ask to talk to the counselor's supervisor.

We hope you have attempted to resolve your disagreement with DRS through your counselor. However, if the results were not to your satisfaction, you may request a review by a hearing officer or a mediator to help reach an agreement.

You can get a copy of the brochure "Can We Talk? Appeal Procedures for Consumers" from your counselor which further explains the appeal process.



## **Are There Other Places I Can Go To Ask Questions About DRS?**

You can call the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) Information and Referral Line at 1-800-628-5115 to speak with a member of the DARS Inquiries Unit or, if you would like to speak to someone outside the agency, you may contact the Client Assistance Program (CAP) at Advocacy, Inc. at 1-800-252-9108.

### **Advocacy, Inc.**

7800 Shoal Creek Blvd., #171-E,  
Austin, Texas 78757

Or visit Advocacy, Inc. online at:  
<http://www.advocacyinc.org>

CAP can help you:

- ◆ understand VR services;
- ◆ communicate better with your VR counselor;
- ◆ mediate disagreements;
- ◆ take administrative or legal steps; and
- ◆ refer you to other services and benefits.

If you believe that you have been discriminated against because of your disability, feel free to contact the Texas Health and Human Services Commission's 504 Coordinator for assistance at:

### **Health and Human Services Commission - Civil Rights Office**

4900 North Lamar Boulevard  
Austin, Texas 78751-2399  
Phone: 1-888-388-6332







The Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services is an equal opportunity employer and service provider.

web address: [www.dars.state.tx.us](http://www.dars.state.tx.us)

DARS Inquiries: 1-800-628-5115

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