

# Vocational Rehabilitation: An Introduction

**TS**  
Tip Sheet

## Overview

Approximately 20% of the adult population has a disability. Most deaf individuals do not seek vocational rehabilitation (VR) services, but those who do most often seek employment-related services or education and/or training to prepare for employment.

## What is vocational rehabilitation?

VR is a state-federal partnership program, with each state managing its own program within set federal guidelines. The broad-based goal of VR is to provide employment-related services that result in competitive employment in a career that matches the VR consumer's strengths, interests, abilities, and employment goals.

## What kinds of services are included in VR?

VR agencies offer a variety of services including, but not limited to, career counseling, vocational assessment, assistive technology, job placement, soft-skills development, and on-the-job training. The specific services provided are tailored to meet an individual's specific career goal and are determined when developing an individualized plan for employment (IPE).

Research findings indicate that deaf VR consumers are more likely to become competitively employed after receiving services ranging from postsecondary education, on-the-job training, assessment, counseling and guidance, restoration, and other job-placement services.<sup>1</sup>

## Who is eligible for VR services?

Anyone who has a disability that creates a substantial barrier to employment and could benefit from VR services is eligible to apply to their state program. However, VR is not an entitlement program, and not all applicants are eligible for services. According to section 102(a) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, to qualify for VR services, an individual must

- have a physical or mental impairment that constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment;
- be able to benefit from VR services by achieving an employment outcome; and
- require vocational rehabilitation services to prepare for, enter, engage in, or retain gainful employment.

Moreover, as a result of funding constraints, federal and state regulations often mandate that individuals with the most significant disabilities receive services first. This eligibility is determined through a process referred to as the "order of selection." Although this process varies from state to state, and not all states use the order of selection process, most states follow a four-category priority system. Individuals with the most need tend to present disabilities that result in serious functional limitations in three or more functional capabilities. Those given the lowest priority simply meet the minimum qualifications described above.



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## What does the overall VR process entail?

- 1. Application process and determination of eligibility:** VR services begin with an intake interview with a VR counselor and submission of an application. Eligibility is determined in 60 days or less.
- 2. Assessment of vocational needs:** To learn more about the applicant's interests and skills and to determine effective services, the VR agency administers a battery of assessments related to the goal of employment.
- 3. Development of an IPE:** An IPE is a plan that charts a course of action to achieve a specific employment goal. The VR counselor and the person with a disability work together to develop the plan based on vocational goals and assessment results. Once completed, services begin.
- 4. Implementation of the IPE:** With an IPE in place, the VR agency coordinates services consistent with the IPE.
- 5. Job placement:** Placement services may include job coaching, identifying job leads, interviewing, and on-the-job training. To ensure long-term success, the VR agency monitors and provides support for the first 90 days on the job.

## Where can one find more information about VR services?

Because each state manages its own department or division of rehabilitation services, individuals need to contact their state agency to obtain more information. Contact information for all state VR offices is included in the Related Resources section below.

Individuals with disabilities are not required to be VR clients to receive accommodations at postsecondary institutions. With the passage of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, institutions of higher learning are obligated to provide accommodations to individuals with disabilities. However, it is common for the VR agency and the postsecondary institution to work in tandem to provide accommodations.

## Related Resources

- Vocational Rehabilitation: Understanding Service Options: [www.nationaldeafcenter.org/vrservices](http://www.nationaldeafcenter.org/vrservices)
- State Vocational Rehabilitation Programs: [www.parac.org/svrp.html](http://www.parac.org/svrp.html)

Additional resources on this subject may be available at [www.nationaldeafcenter.org/resources](http://www.nationaldeafcenter.org/resources)

## Reference

- <sup>1</sup>Moore, C. L. (2001). Disparities in job placement outcomes among deaf, late-deafened, and hard-of-hearing consumers. *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin*, 44(3), 144–150. Retrieved from [www.tinyurl.com/coreymoore2001](http://www.tinyurl.com/coreymoore2001)



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Additional resources can be found at [www.nationaldeafcenter.org](http://www.nationaldeafcenter.org)