



**Getting a**



**Head Start**



**with**

**Vocational**



**Rehabilitation**

## Introduction

Choosing a career is a big decision. Finding the right job can be challenging. Keeping a job and moving up is hard work 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 it as Vocational Rehabilitation or VR.

To help you prepare for meeting with VR, The Arc Tennessee, Disability Rights Tennessee and Vocational Rehabilitation created this booklet.

## WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR VR?

People are eligible for VR services if:

- Their disability makes it hard for them to get or keep a job;
- They need help to get or keep a job that is right for them; and
- They can benefit from VR services.

The VR Counselor decides if someone is eligible for VR services. This decision is based on: medical records, education records, and information the person or their family shares with their VR Counselor. VR can help you get this paperwork.

The eligibility decision may require evaluations or assessments. When that happens, the VR Counselor will set up different assessments, such as trial work experiences or other evaluations. These help the VR Counselor decide how to help someone get a job.

The VR Counselor has 60 days after someone applies to decide if they are eligible for services. Sometimes the decision takes longer. If VR needs more time, the VR counselor will ask the applicant to agree to that in writing.

People who get SSI or SSDI (because they have a disability) are presumed eligible for the VR program and can get VR services if they want to work.

## 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 who is eligible for services, VR goes into an Order of Selection.

Under an Order of Selection, VR puts eligible individuals into Priority Categories based on the severity of their disabilities and the amount of services they need. In this situation, only certain Priority Categories will be able to receive services.

To qualify as 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



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## 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 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. You have the right to pick services and providers (schools, etc.). 34 CFR §361.45 and §361.52
6. You have the right to change your IPE, your job goal or services. 34 CFR §361.45
7. You have the right to review your IPE at least once a year. 34 CFR §361.45
8. You have the right to review the VR Policy Manual. TCA § 10-7-503(a)(1)(A)(i)
9. You have the right to appeal any decision made by VR that you do not agree with, including eligibility. 34 CFR §361.57
10. 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. A copy of the regulations is available at

<https://www.law.cornell.edu/cfr/text/34/part-361>

## Tips

1. If the school does not connect a person with a disability to VR, call VR. (Directory at the end of this booklet.)
2. Before meeting with the VR Counselor consider types of work enjoyed. VR helps find *paid jobs*. Any training received must be needed to get the job goal.
3. If a person is on a waiting list for employment services, ask the VR Counselor about options.
4. Once the IPE is signed, the VR client must stay in touch with their VR Counselor at least monthly. If necessary, leave a phone message or send an email.
5. The VR Counselor must approve all changes to the IPE.
6. For information on "Ticket to Work" visit: <https://www.ssa.gov/work/>
7. Applicants and clients need to tell their VR Counselor the best way to contact them (e.g. text, email).
8. The VR Counselor needs to know if applicants need information in another format (e.g. Braille, Spanish).
9. When receiving VR services, it is important to contact your VR Counselor as soon as you think you have a problem.
12. If you have a rough semester, do not give up. Your VR Counselor is there to help and support you. They will have ideas to help.
13. When training, do not drop a class until you speak with your VR Counselor.
14. 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).
15. Follow rules where you are getting training.
16. 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
17. 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.



## The Individualized Plan for Employment

The VR Counselor can help the client learn what work they want to do and the skills needed. The client may need training.

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

If the client is interested in self-employment, they can discuss that with their VR Counselor.

It is up to the client to visit potential training providers to find a good fit. The VR Counselor will help make a decision based on interests, what the client does well, and the client's desired work. Some Tennessee job training options include postsecondary programs like Next Steps at Vanderbilt, IDEAL at Lipscomb University, Union EDGE Program at Union University, Tiger LIFE at the University of Memphis, and UT FUTURE at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville; college and/or university; Tennessee College of Applied Technology; the Tennessee Rehabilitation Center (TRC) in Smyrna; a Community Rehabilitation Provider and others.

Guidance Counselors and VR Counselors can help find where to get training. They can help match the school to the person. A VR Counselor can help schedule a tour at TRC in Smyrna. There are also Community TRCs around the state where VR clients can learn job skills.



**To prepare for the first meeting with a VR Counselor, it is helpful to know what kind of work one might find interesting. The following pages have tools to help find ideas. Remember, the applicant is not looking for just any job. The applicant seeks a job that interests them and that they can do now or with training, and that allows them to support themselves – something to start a career.**



## Job Planning

1. Things One Enjoys Doing
2. Things One Dislikes Doing
3. Things That Are Okay To Do
4. Things One Really Dislikes Doing

## Work Interests

1. What activities do you like? What are your interests and hobbies? Here is a tool to help: <http://transitiontn.org/>.
2. What are your work or volunteer experiences?
3. Look through the Occupational Outlook Handbook, a guide for skills and training needed for jobs: <http://www.careeronestop.org/ExploreCareers/explore-careers.aspx>.
4. Talk to friends and relatives about their jobs. Is their work interesting? What training did they need?
5. Look at jobs at: <https://www.jobs4tn.gov/>. What jobs look interesting? Why are the jobs interesting? This is a pretty complicated site. Ask for help if you need it.

## Work Planning

Knowing the kind of work that is interesting to you will help when working with a VR Counselor. These questions will help you prepare for the first meeting with your VR Counselor. Ask a teacher or family member for help if you need it.

1. What things am I good at doing?
2. What education have I had?
3. What type of job training have I had?
4. What work experience have I had?
5. What volunteer experience have I had?
6. What kinds of work am I interested in? Why?
8. What kinds of jobs do NOT interest me? 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?

VR Regional Offices: <a href="https://www.tn.gov/content/tn/humanservices/ds/office-locator-trc-ttap.html">https://www.tn.gov/content/tn/humanservices/ds/office-locator-trc-ttap.html</a>	
<p><b><u>Region 1</u></b>            103 Walnut Street            Johnson City, Tennessee 37601            Phone: (423) 926-3178            TTY: (423) 434-6899  <b>Counties &amp; TRCs Served:</b> Carter, Cocke, Grainger, Greene, Hamblen, Hancock, Hawkins, Jefferson, Johnson, Sullivan, Unicoi, Washington</p>	<p><b><u>Region 2</u></b>            520 West Summit Hill Drive, Suite 301            Knoxville, TN 37902            Phone: (865) 594-6060            TTY: (865) 594-6006  <b>Counties &amp; TRCs Served:</b> Anderson, Blount, Campbell, Claiborne, Knox, Loudon, Monroe, Morgan, Roane, Scott, Sevier, Union</p>
<p><b><u>Region 3</u></b>            Eastgate Center, Suite 602-B            5600 Brainerd Road            Chattanooga, TN 37411            Phone: (423) 634-6700            TTY: (423) 634-6717  <b>Counties &amp; TRCs Served:</b> Bledsoe, Bradley, Coffee, Franklin, Grundy, Hamilton, Marion, McMinn, Meigs, Moore, Polk, Rhea, Sequatchie</p>	<p><b><u>Region 4</u></b>            955 E. 20th Street            Cookeville, TN 38501            Phone: (931) 526-9783            TTY: (931) 525-6622  <b>Counties &amp; TRCs Served:</b> Cannon, Clay, Cumberland, DeKalb, Fentress, Jackson, Macon, Overton, Pickett, Putnam, Smith, Sumner, Trousdale, Van Buren, Warren, White, Wilson</p>
<p><b><u>Region 5</u></b>            1000 2nd Avenue North            Nashville, TN 37203            Phone/TTY: (615) 741-1606  <b>Counties &amp; TRCs Served:</b> Davidson, Robertson</p>	<p><b><u>Region 6</u></b>            206 Wayne Street            Columbia, TN 38401            Phone/TTY: (931) 380-2550  <b>Counties &amp; TRCs Served:</b> Bedford, Giles, Hickman, Lawrence, Lewis, Lincoln, Marshall, Maury, Perry, Rutherford, Wayne, Williamson</p>
<p><b><u>Region 7</u></b>            225 Martin Luther King Boulevard            Suite 140, Box 15            Jackson, TN 38301            Phone: (731) 423-5620            TTY: (731) 423-5625  <b>Counties &amp; TRCs Served:</b> Chester, Decatur, Fayette, Hardeman, Hardin, Haywood, Henderson, Lauderdale, Madison, McNairy, Tipton</p>	<p><b><u>Region 8</u></b>            1575 Corporate Parkway Boulevard            Clarksville, TN 37040            Phone: (931) 648-5560  <b>Counties &amp; TRCs Served:</b> Benton, Carroll, Cheatham, Crockett, Dickson, Dyer, Gibson, Henry, Houston, Humphreys, Lake, Montgomery, Obion, Stewart, Weakley</p>
<p><b><u>Region 9</u></b>            1 Commerce Square, DHS/DVR, 40 South Main Street, 10th Floor, Suite 1000, Memphis, TN 38103            Phone/TTY: (901) 528-5284  <b>Counties &amp; TRCs Served:</b> Shelby</p>	
<p><b><u>Region 10</u></b>            Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired            5600 Brainerd Road, Chattanooga, TN 37411            Phone: (615) 741-0193 (Nashville); (423) 634-6712 (Chattanooga)  <b>All Counties Served</b></p>	
<p><b><u>Region 11</u></b>            Services for the Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing            520 West Summit Hill Drive, Suite 301, Knoxville, TN 37902            Phone: (865) 594-6861; (865) 594-6860  <b>All Counties Served</b></p>	

**This document was prepared by:**

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

**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>

