



Getting a



Head Start

with



Vocational



Rehabilitation

Introduction

Deciding on a career, finding and keeping a job can be a challenge for anyone. People with disabilities face additional challenges.

The Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) (Public Law 93–203) were enacted in 1973, to train workers and provide them with jobs.

The program offered those with low incomes full-time jobs. People learned skills to help them get jobs at the end of the program. It was an extension of the Works Progress Administration program from the 1930s.

Just as with other laws, CETA has been renamed and has evolved over the years. It has been known as the Training Partnership Act, The Workforce Investment Act, and now The Workforce Investment Opportunity Act. The law has changed to meet the changing needs of society. It is now believed all people who want to work should have the opportunity, including people with disabilities. Helping people with disabilities get paying jobs funded through states by Vocational Rehabilitation programs.

Vocational Rehabilitation is a division of The Department of Human Services. The State of Tennessee refers to this as The Division of Rehabilitation Services. Most people in the disability community refer to it as Vocational Rehabilitation or VR.

Because this system can be challenging to navigate, folks from The Arc Tennessee, Disability Rights Tennessee and VR worked together to create this booklet.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR VR?

When people apply for VR services, they meet with a VR Case Manager. Applicants need to give their VR Counselor information from their doctor(s), school records or other sources to document their disability. When it is difficult to get this paperwork, the VR Counselor can help.

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 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.

The VR Counselor has 60 days after someone applies to decide if they will get services. Sometimes the decision takes longer. If VR needs more time, the VR counselor will ask the applicant to agree to that in writing. The eligibility decision may take longer if the VR Counselor thinks an applicant's disability is too bad for VR to help getting a job. When that happens, the VR Counselor will set up different assessments, such as trial work experiences or extended evaluations. They help the VR Counselor decide how to help someone get a job.

People who get SSI or SSDI (because they have a disability) can get VR services if they want to work.

Order of Selection and Priority Categories

Order of Selection is important. It is required by federal law when there is not enough money for VR to serve everyone who is eligible for services. There are four Priority Categories. VR decides the Priority Category (PC) for each eligible person. By federal law, VR must serve individuals with the most significant disabilities first.

People who qualify as Priority Category 1 (PC 1) have the most significant disabilities that cause serious problems in two or more areas that make it hardest to get a job, work, and take at least six months to get a job. They want a job.

People who qualify as Priority Category 2 (PC2) have significant disabilities that cause serious problems in two or more areas that make it hard to get a job, work, and take at least six months to get a job. People who get SSI or SSDI because they have a disability or are blind are included. They want a job.

People who qualify as Priority Categories three (PC3) and four (PC4) have trouble getting and keeping jobs but are not as significant as PC1 and PC2. These disabilities do not create as severe a problem in getting a job. Individuals in PC4 need only a few VR services and they want a job.



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Information Needed When Applying for VR

Applicants need to give their VR Counselor enough information from your doctor(s), school records or other sources to explain your disability. If an applicant cannot get this paperwork, their VR Counselor can help. To qualify as Priority Category 1, this paperwork must show that their disability causes limitations in two or more “functional capacities” as defined by VR policy:

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



RIGHTS

1. You have the right to know if you are eligible within 60 days of when you apply. 34 CFR §361.42
2. You have the right to develop your own IPE. 34 CFR §361.45 - §361.46
3. You have the right to get all the 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 look at your IPE at least once a year with. 34 CFR §361.45
8. You have the right to review the VR Policy Manual. 34 CFR §361.50
9. You have the right to appeal any decision made by VR that you do not agree with. 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 <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/cfr/index.html>.

If you disagree with a decision made by your VR Counselor and cannot resolve it by talking to your counselor's supervisor, you can get help appealing from the Client Assistance Program (CAP) at Disability Tennessee Rights at 800/342-1660; 615/298-1080 (TDD); 888/852-2852 (TTY).

Tips

1. If the school does not connect a person with a disability to VR, call VR. (Directory at the back of this booklet.)
2. Before meeting with the VR Case Manager the applicant should think about the type of work they want to do. VR helps find *paid* jobs. Any training will depend on the work plan.
3. If a person is on a waiting list for employment services, ask about options.
4. Once the IPE is signed, the applicant 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: <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/work/aboutticket.html>.
7. Applicants need to tell their VR Counselor the best way to contact them (e.g. phone, or email).
8. Applicants should tell their VR Counselor know if they need information in another format (e.g. Braille or another language).
9. When receiving VR services, it is important stay in touch with the 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 Disability Services office where you get training. They can help you talk with support 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 until you get answers. Take someone (like a parent) 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.

Success!

"I am so glad I had my mom to help me through the Vocational Rehabilitation application process. She thought of questions I never would have imagined. She made sure I registered with the Disability Services office at Tennessee Tech. They helped me get the supports I needed to graduate."

Nick

Getting Ready for The Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) Meeting

The VR Counselor can help the applicant learn what work they want to do and the skills needed. The applicant may need training. Some 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; a college and/or university; Tennessee College of Applied Technology; the Tennessee Rehabilitation Center (TRC) in Smyrna; a Community Rehabilitation Provider and others. It is up to the applicant to visit potential training providers to find a good fit. The VR counselor will help make a decision based on interests, what the applicant does well, and the client's desired work.

Guidance Counselors and VR Counselors can help find where to get training. They can help identify which schools may be most "disability friendly."

One place to get job training is the Tennessee Rehabilitation Center (TRC) in Smyrna, TN. They have personal and vocational training. The VR recipients can get vocational evaluations, employee development, personal and vocational training. Counselor can schedule a tour. There are also Community TRC's around the state where VR clients can learn job skills.



Finding the Right Type of Work

The VR Counselor will guide the applicant 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 applicant wants, training, educating, and/or services needed to get that job.

If the applicant thinks they would like to be self-employed, they should discuss how that might work with their VR Case Manager.

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.

Job Planning Tool

Things That I Enjoy Doing:

Things That Are Okay to Do:

Things That I Dislike Doing:

Things I *Really* Dislike Doing:

Work Interests

1. What do you like to do? What are your interests and hobbies? Here is a tool to help:
<http://www.ou.edu/education/centers-and-partnerships/zarrow.html?rd=1>.

2. What kind of work or volunteer experiences have you enjoyed?

3. Visit Tennessee's Career Center webpage to look at jobs:
<http://www.job.com/?us=6169¶m2=Tennessee&opt=1&rmf=1&nmt=o>. Do you see jobs you like?

5. Look through the Occupational Outlook Handbook. This will help you see skills and training needed for jobs: <http://www.careeronestop.org/ExploreCareers/explore-careers.aspx>.

6. Talk to friends and relatives about their jobs. Is their work interesting? What training did they need?

7. Look at jobs at: jobs.net/Tennessee.htm. What jobs look interesting? What do you like about them? This is a pretty complicated site. Ask for help if you need it.

Work Planning

Knowing the kind of work you want to do will help when you work with your VR Counselor. Complete this worksheet before meeting with your counselor. Ask a teacher or family member for help if you need it.

1. What things are you good at doing?

2. What education have you had?

3. What type of job training have you had?

4. What work experience have you had?

5. What volunteer experience have you had?

6. What kinds of work are you interested in? Why?

7. Do you need training to do the job you want? If you do, what type of training?

8. What kinds of jobs do NOT interest you? Why?

9. Do you want to work? Do you need health insurance?

VR Regional Offices with Counties Served: <http://tn.gov/humanservices/article/office-locator-trc-ttap>

<p><u>Region 1</u> 905 Buffalo Street Johnson City, Tennessee 37605-2120 Telephone: 423/434-6934 Fax: 423/434-6963 Counties & TRCs Served: Carter, Cocke, Grainger, Greene, Hamblen, Hancock, Hawkins, Jefferson, Johnson, Sullivan, Unicoi, Washington</p>	<p><u>Region 2</u> State Office Building 531 W. Summit Hill Drove, Suite 301 Knoxville, Tennessee 37902 Telephone/TTY: 865/594-6060 Fax: 865/523-7852 or 865/594-6535 Counties & TRCs Served: Anderson, Blount, Campbell, Claiborne, Knox, Loudon, Monroe, Morgan, Roane, Scott, Sevier, Union</p>
<p><u>Region 3</u> Eastgate Center, Suite 602-B 5600 Brainerd Road Chattanooga, Tennessee 37411 Telephone: 423/634-6700 Fax: 423/634-1976 Counties & TRCs Served: Bledsoe, Bradley, Coffee, Franklin, Grundy, Hamilton, Marion, McMinn, Meigs, Moore, Polk, Rhea, Sequatchie</p>	<p><u>Region 4</u> 955 E. 20th Street Cookeville, Tennessee 38501-2472 Telephone/TTY: 931/526-9783 Fax: 931/525-1614 Counties & TRCs Served: Cannon, Clay, Cumberland, DeKalb, Fentress, Jackson, Macon, Overton, Pickett, Putnam, Smith, Sumner, Trousdale, Van Buren, Warren, White</p>
<p><u>Region 5</u> 88 Hermitage Avenue Nashville, Tennessee 37210 Telephone: 615/741-1606 Fax: 615/741-8180 Counties Served: Davidson, Robertson</p>	<p><u>Region 6</u> 6000 Trotwood Avenue Columbia, Tennessee 38401-7003 Telephone: 931/380-2563 Fax: 931/380-2567 Counties & TRCs Served: Bedford, Giles, Hickman, Lawrence, Lewis, Lincoln, Marshall, Maury, Perry, Rutherford, Wayne, Williamson, Wilson</p>
<p><u>Region 7</u> Lowell Thomas State Office Bldg, Box 15 225 Martin Luther King Boulevard Jackson, Tennessee 38301 Telephone: 731/423-5620 Fax: 731/426-0563 Counties & TRCs Served: Chester, Crockett, Decatur, Fayette, Hardeman, Hardin, Haywood, Henderson, Lauderdale, Madison, McNairy, Tipton</p>	<p><u>Region 8</u> 560 Benton Industrial Road Camden, Tennessee 38320 Telephone: 731/584-2147 Fax: 731/584-6795 Counties & TRCs Served: Benton, Carroll, Cheatham, Dickson, Dyer, Gibson, Henry, Houston, Humphreys, Lake, Montgomery, Obion, Robertson, Stewart, Weakley</p>
<p><u>Region 9</u> 170 North Main Street, 3rd Floor Memphis, Tennessee 38103-1820 Telephone/TDD: 901/528-5284 Fax: 901/543-6036 Counties & Served: Shelby</p>	<p><u>Region 10 & Region 11</u> Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (10) Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (11) Citizens Plaza State Office Building, 12th Floor 400 Deaderick Street Nashville, Tennessee 37243 Telephone: 615/313-4914 TTY, Long-Distance: 1-800-270-1349 Fax: (615) 313-6508</p>

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

800/342-1660; 615/298-1080 (TDD); 888/852-2852 (TTY)
<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, Second Floor, Nashville, TN 37243
http://www.tn.gov/humanserv/rehab/rehab_main.html



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