



**Getting a**



**Head Start**

**with**



**Vocational**



**Rehabilitation**

## Introduction

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

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.

Because this system can be difficult to navigate, 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. When it is difficult to get this paperwork, the VR Counselor can help.

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. 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 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.

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

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



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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 §361.42
2. You have the right to develop your own IPE. 34 CFR §361.41(b)(2)
3. You have the right to get 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. 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>.

## 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 case manager 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: <https://www.ssa.gov/work/>
7. Applicants need to tell their VR Counselor the best way to contact them (e.g. text, email).
8. VR Counselor need to know if applicants need information in another format (e.g. Braille, Spanish).
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 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 applicant learn what work they want to do and the skills needed. The applicant may need training.

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, education, and/or services needed to get that job.

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

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. 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
2. Things that are Okay to do
4. Things One Really Dislikes Doing

## Work Interests

1. What activities are enjoyed? What are interests and hobbies? Here is a tool to help:  
<http://www.ou.edu/education/centers-and-partnerships/zarrow.html?rd=1>.
2. What are work or volunteer experiences?
3. Visit Tennessee's Career Center webpage to look at jobs:  
<http://www.job.com/?us=6169&param2=Tennessee&opt=l&rmf=1&nmt=o>.
5. Look through the Occupational Outlook Handbook, a guide for 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: <https://www.jobs4tn.gov/vosnet/Default.aspx>. 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 do will help when working with a VR Counselor. These questions will help you prepare for the first meeting with your 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 you 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: <https://www.tn.gov/content/tn/humanservices/ds/office-locator-trc-ttap.html>**

**Region 1**

103 Walnut Street  
Johnson City, Tennessee 37601  
Phone: (423) 926-3178  
TTY: (423) 434-6899

**Counties & TRCs Served:** Carter, Cocke, Grainger, Greene, Hamblen, Hancock, Hawkins, Jefferson, Johnson, Sullivan, Unicoi, Washington

**Region 2**

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

**Region 3**

Eastgate Center, Suite 602-B  
5600 Brainerd Road  
Chattanooga, TN 37411  
Phone: (423) 634-6700  
TTY: (423) 634-6717

**Counties & TRCs Served:** Bledsoe, Bradley, Coffee, Franklin, Grundy, Hamilton, Marion, McMinn, Meigs, Moore, Polk, Rhea, Sequatchie

**Region 4**

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, Pickett, Putnam, Smith, Sumner, Trousdale, Van Buren, Warren, White, Wilson

**Region 5**

1000 2nd Avenue North  
Nashville, TN 37203  
Phone/TTY: (615) 741-1606

**Counties & TRCs Served:** Davidson, Robertson

**Region 6**

206 Wayne Street  
Columbia, TN 38401  
Phone/TTY: (931) 380-2550

**Counties & TRCs Served:** Bedford, Giles, Hickman, Lawrence, Lewis, Lincoln, Marshall, Maury, Perry, Rutherford, Wayne, Williamson

**Region 7**

225 Martin Luther King Boulevard  
Suite 140, Box 15  
Jackson, TN 38301  
Phone: (731) 423-5620  
TTY: (731) 423-5625

**Counties & TRCs Served:** Chester, Decatur, Fayette, Hardeman, Hardin, Haywood, Henderson, Lauderdale, Madison, McNairy, Tipton

**Region 8**

1575 Corporate Parkway Boulevard  
Clarksville, TN 37040  
Phone: (931) 648-5560

**Counties & TRCs Served:** Benton, Carroll, Cheatham, Crockett, Dickson, Dyer, Gibson, Henry, Houston, Humphreys, Lake, Montgomery, Obion, Stewart, Weakley

**Region 9**

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

**Region 10**

Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired  
5600 Brainerd Road, Chattanooga, TN 37411  
Phone: (615) 741-0193 (Nashville); (423) 634-6712 (Chattanooga)  
All Counties Served

**Region 11**

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  
All Counties Served

**This document was prepared by:**

**The Arc Tennessee**

615/248-5878 or 800/835-7077

545 Mainstream Drive, Suite 100, Nashville, TN 37228

<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>



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