

Vocational Rehabilitation: Understanding Service Options

Prior to reading this information it is recommended to first read
[*Vocational Rehabilitation: An Introduction.*](#)

Overview

At the nucleus of every successful VR employment goal is a well-delineated Individual Plan for Employment (IPE), often referred to as a *roadmap of services* that lead to employment. By better understanding the myriad services offered by VR, a deaf individual is better positioned to make informed and self-determined choices about their employment future.

Vocational Rehabilitation offers a wide range of services. Some services are tangible, such as an alarm clock, uniform for work, hearing aid, etc. Other services are more intangible in nature, such as counseling, soft skills training or career guidance.

What type of personnel provide VR services ?

The “gatekeeper” to VR services is the *VR Counselor*, who serves as the primary point of contact for deaf individuals as they access the vocational rehabilitation system. It is the counselor who works closely with the individual to create the IPE and coordinate the services needed to carry out the plan. In some states, VR counselors manage caseloads of more than 100 consumers.

VR also relies on numerous other service providers, both VR employees and independent contractors. In-house personnel often include employment coaches, job placement specialists, and testing and assessment specialists. Independent contractors may include psychologists, audiologists, physicians and community rehabilitation providers. Depending upon the state, interpreters may be in-house personnel or independent contractors.

How are services determined?

The process of determining the services needed to achieve an employment goal begins with the development of the IPE. As a team, the counselor and consumer engage in career exploration, and identify a battery of assessments and/or evaluations to help guide the decision-making process. There are two primary purposes for conducting assessments and evaluations: 1) they create an objective mechanism to gather more information about the strengths, abilities, capabilities, interests, resources, and concerns that the individual has at the time of the evaluation; and 2) they provide a vehicle to identify products, such as hearing aids or assistive technology consistent with the employment goal. Common assessments and evaluations include vocational interest batteries, psychological evaluations, and audiological examinations.

What are some of the more common services provided by VR?

Counseling and guidance: Throughout the VR process, counseling and guidance is often provided by the VR counselor. The intent of counseling and guidance is to identify and develop strategies to resolve any barriers to achieving successful employment. Some of the topics addressed during counseling and guidance include personal adjustment, social and family issues, and vocational goals.

Training: Training is a formalized process which expands an individual's understanding of a subject or improves their ability to do a specific task. There are many different types of training options utilized by VR. Training may be as simple as learning how to use assistive technology. It may focus on job readiness or mobility or include specific on-the-job training. This type of training teaches very explicit sets of skills specific to obtaining or maintaining employment.

Training can also be more long-term and focus on the development of a set of vocational skills that improve an individual's ability to be hired in a particular field. This type of training is often vocational/occupational in nature or results in a postsecondary degree.

Technology: A VR counselor may recommend the purchase of technology for use by deaf individuals if it supports their employment goals. Such technology can include hearing aids, vibrating alarm clocks, computers, assistive listening devices and other adaptive equipment.

Job-Placement: The goal of VR is gainful employment. As such, many VR services focus on job readiness, job-seeking, job placement, and on-the-job support services. This category of services often involves working one-on-one with a professional who has specialized experience in helping deaf individuals obtain and maintain employment. Activities often take the form of learning how to identify potential employment opportunities, developing a resume, engaging in interview practice, and receiving job coaching once a job is obtained.

Other: When individuals prepare for and seek employment they may encounter the need for other services or tangible products such as: transportation assistance, textbooks, uniforms, and assistive technology. In some instances, these services can be provided by VR.

In terms of paying for services, VR is often considered the "payer of last resort." For some services, vocational rehabilitation agency will consider an individual's financial resources. It is important to remember that vocational rehabilitation is just one potential resource for assisting in a student's college education. Funding through a vocational rehabilitation agency is not intended to replace other forms of financial assistance such as grants, loans, and scholarships.

Additional Resources

- Vocational Rehabilitation: An Introduction:
www.nationaldeafcenter.org/vrintro
- National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers (NCIEC): Interpreting in the VR Setting:
www.tinyurl.com/nciecVRinterpreting

Additional resources on this subject may be available at www.NationalDeafCenter.org.

