



REHABILITATION SERVICES HANDBOOK

OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
Edward G. Rendell, Governor

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRY
Stephen M. Schmerin, Secretary

OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION
William A. Gannon, Executive Director

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DEPARTMENT OF
LABOR & INDUSTRY
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

*Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.
Equal Opportunity Employer/Program*



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This guide will help explain vocational rehabilitation -- how it works, and how you can make it work for you. Your Counselor will also explain vocational rehabilitation services and answer any questions that you or anyone in your family may have.

WHAT IS OVR?

The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) serves people who have disabilities that present a substantial impediment to employment. Services are provided to individuals to prepare for, enter into, engage in, or retain employment. OVR has 21 District Offices located around the State. Our Counselors work every year with thousands of persons who have physical, mental, and emotional disabilities.

SHOULD I APPLY TO OVR?

You should apply if:

1. You have a disability,
2. Your disability causes you substantial problems in preparing for, obtaining, or maintaining a career, and
3. You want to work.

HOW DO I GET STARTED?

For more information about services, call or write the OVR District Office listed on the back of this brochure that is nearest to where you live.

CAN OVR HELP PEOPLE WHO ARE DEAF?

Yes, each District Office has at least one Counselor for the deaf who can communicate with you in sign language and with a Text Telephone (TTY).

WILL I BE ELIGIBLE?

When you apply to OVR for help with employment, a Counselor will be assigned to work with you. The Counselor will meet with you face-to-face to get to know you in order to decide how OVR can best help you to help yourself. With your written consent, your Counselor will gather information about your needs, your interests, aptitudes, education, work experience, family, and finances. Your Counselor will arrange any needed medical examinations and testing, at no cost to you. You will be eligible for OVR services if:

- You have a disability, that is a physical, mental, or emotional impairment which results in a substantial impediment to employment and you can benefit in terms of an employment outcome from services provided, and
- Vocational rehabilitation services are required for you to prepare for, enter, engage in, or retain gainful employment.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE TO DETERMINE IF I AM ELIGIBLE?

You will know if you are eligible for OVR services within 60 days of the date you apply for OVR services, unless

- Exceptional and unforeseen circumstances beyond our control preclude us from completing the determination AND you agree an extension is warranted, or
- An Extended Evaluation is required to determine your eligibility.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER I BECOME ELIGIBLE FOR OVR?

You and your Counselor will work together to make informed choices regarding a cooperative plan of action to include a career goal, the services needed to help you help yourself to get started in or maintain your career, and your responsibilities. This plan of action is called the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).

Deciding on your goal usually takes time. During this time you will receive information and options to assist you in developing a successful program. You will have the opportunity to consider different types of careers, your job skills, chances for employment in your local area, potential earnings, family responsibilities, training, and other matters of importance to you and your family.

Your Counselor wants you to pick the right career, one that you will still want and at which you will still be able to work years from now. Your IPE outlines the steps you will take to obtain a job and can be changed if your needs change. You and your Counselor will work together to make any necessary changes.

WHAT SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE TO ME?

Some services can help you overcome or lessen your disability; others can directly help you prepare for a career. The services you receive will be arranged to meet your individual needs. Not everyone will need every service.

- **Diagnostic Services** include medical, psychological, and audiological exams and tests used to better understand your disability and your needs for specific types of services.
- **Vocational Evaluation** includes testing such as aptitude, interest, general ability, academic exams, work tolerance, and "hands-on" job experience used to understand your vocational potential.
- **Counseling Services** are offered to help you find ways to better help yourself throughout the rehabilitation program from the first meeting with your Counselor to your starting and maintaining a career. Counseling Services help you to better understand your potential, rely on your abilities, set realistic vocational goals, change them when necessary, develop successful work habits, and begin a satisfying career.

- **Restoration Services** include many types of medical services and equipment such as physical and occupational therapy, wheelchairs, automobile hand controls, and other types of rehabilitation technology that may be provided to enable you to pursue your career and achieve independence.
- **Training Services** include education to prepare you for a job including but not limited to basic academic, vocational/technical, college, on-the-job, independent living skills, and personal and work adjustment training. It may be necessary for you to leave home to get the training you want and need.
- **Placement Services** include counseling, job-seeking programs, job club, and job development used to increase your ability to obtain a job. You will receive ideas, practice, and advice on finding job leads, filling out applications, getting interviews for a job, and how to interview. Your Counselor may also give you job leads or explain to employers about tax credits they can receive when hiring you. The more contacts with employers you make, the better your chances are of starting your career.

Support services are provided if they are necessary for you to start your career. Such services may include:

- Room, board, and transportation costs during your evaluation or while you are completing a rehabilitation program
- Occupational tools, licenses, or equipment
- Home modifications, adaptive or special household equipment related to obtaining or maintaining a job
- Van or car modifications, including special driving devices or lifting devices to enable you to travel to your job
- Personal care assistance provided to help you with your daily needs in order to enable you to participate in a vocational rehabilitation program
- Job site modifications that will enable you to obtain and keep a job
- Independent living training to provide the means for you to become more self-sufficient and thereby make it possible for you to participate fully in the vocational rehabilitation program
- Text Telephone (TTY), signaling devices, hearing aids, and interpreter services may be provided to help you communicate if needed to participate in the vocational rehabilitation program.

HOW MUCH WILL THIS COST ME?

It does not cost you anything to apply for services. There is no charge for diagnostic services, vocational evaluation, counseling, or job placement assistance. If you are eligible for services, your Counselor may ask you to provide documents about your income and expenses. Depending upon your income, you may have to

contribute to the cost of OVR services. OVR cannot pay for any services you received before you applied to OVR. Even after you apply, OVR can pay only for those services approved in advance by your Counselor.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE ME TO START MY CAREER?

That depends on your abilities, the career for which you are preparing, and on your individual needs. Most important, it depends on how much responsibility you take for helping yourself to prepare for, start or maintain a career. You can help things move along as quickly as possible if you:

- Help your Counselor get the needed information
- Keep all appointments or call if you can't be there
- Stay in touch with your Counselor (if your Counselor cannot find you, things are bound to slow down)
- Tell your Counselor if you feel things are going too slowly.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS OR COMPLAINTS?

This is your rehabilitation program. Don't hesitate to ask questions about anything. You are entitled to the best service OVR can give you. Your comments, suggestions, and criticisms are important.

If you are an applicant or a customer of OVR and are dissatisfied with a determination or service OVR is providing, you may request a hearing before an impartial Hearing Officer. A written request for a hearing must be made within thirty (30) days. This request must be mailed to or filed with the Director, Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (BVRS), Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, 1521 North Sixth Street, Harrisburg, PA 17102. An impartial Hearing Officer will be assigned to hear and decide your case. You will be given the opportunity for an Informal Administrative Review prior to the impartial hearing. At any time during your program you may contact the Client Assistance Program for help.

WHAT IS THE CLIENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM?

The Client Assistance Program (CAP) works with you and your Counselor to:

- Act as an advocate for your rights;
- Answer your questions about rehabilitation;
- Explain rules, regulations, and procedures;
- Assist you through the appeal process; and
- Help you to establish and maintain open communication.

Any applicant for OVR services who wants general information or who would like CAP's involvement during their rehabilitation program can contact CAP for assistance. If your case is about to be or already has been closed by OVR, you may ask CAP to review the case to ensure that you have received maximum benefits from OVR. To contact CAP, call this toll-free number 1-888-745-2357 Voice/TTY.

WHAT ARE IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER IF I AM DISSATISFIED?

- Try to solve the problem with your Counselor first.
- Your Counselor will help you with an appeal if you ask for help.
- You will not be penalized for making an appeal.
- You may bring someone with you to help you at the appeal.

WHEN DO I LEAVE OVR?

A perfect ending is when you have started your career. Even though you are working and your case is closed, it is possible that help can be provided if you begin to have problems with your employment or with your disability. If this happens, please contact your Counselor. You may choose to end your involvement with OVR at any time, but you should let your Counselor know if you make such a decision. If you do not follow through with the steps you helped to plan; are uncooperative; cannot be located; or if OVR cannot help you reach a vocational goal, your Counselor may find it necessary to close your case.

CAN I START OVER AGAIN?

Yes. You may reapply at any time.

WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS?

- You may not be discriminated against by reason of political or religious opinions or affiliations, race, age, sex, national origin, or disability.
- You are entitled to a thorough evaluation to find out if you are eligible for rehabilitation.
- All information that is given to your Counselor or obtained about you will be used only for your rehabilitation.
- You have a right to ask to change Counselors.
- You have a right to continuing service if you should move to an area serviced by a different District Office within the State. Discuss your move with your Counselor.

HOW WILL I BE TREATED?

You will be treated in a manner consistent with the principles of:

- Individual dignity, personal responsibility, self-determination and pursuit of a meaningful career based on informed choices that you make;
- Respect for your privacy, rights and equal access as an individual;
- Inclusion, integration and full participation as an individual;
- Support for the involvement of a parent, family member, guardian, advocate or authorized representative if you request, desire, or need such assistance;
- Support for individual advocacy and community involvement.

WHAT ARE MY RESPONSIBILITIES?

You are in charge of your rehabilitation program and must be willing to help yourself. You must participate actively in setting your vocational goals and work hard to achieve them. It is very important that you talk to your Counselor about your needs, your deadlines and anything else that could speed up, slow down or stop you from starting and maintaining a career. Rehabilitation will work better if you:

- Keep all appointments, or call if you can't be there
- Ask questions if you do not understand something
- Are honest about your needs and feelings
- Help yourself.

WHAT ARE MY COUNSELOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES?

Your Counselor understands how disabilities can get in the way of a career. It is your Counselor's responsibility to help you understand your strengths and the steps needed to overcome your substantial impediment to employment. Your Counselor will help you decide on a career that builds on your strengths; give you information, provide guidance, and support; and arrange for you to receive the services you need to prepare for, start and maintain a career. We hope that the information in this brochure will help you understand OVR and that it marks the beginning of a successful partnership. If you have any further questions, please ask your Counselor.

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE

When OVR does not have enough money to provide services to all eligible individuals, it is required to provide services according to an Order of Selection. Under an Order of Selection, a certain group (or groups) of individuals receive services while others are placed on an indefinite waiting list for when sufficient funds become available. OVR's Order of Selection places all eligible individuals into one of three groups as follows:

- Individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities
- Individuals with Significant Disabilities
- All remaining eligible individuals.

Should you be eligible for OVR services, your Counselor will inform you if OVR is on an Order of Selection and whether you will be provided services or placed on a waiting list.

OVR'S NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY

An applicant or customer of OVR may not be discriminated against by reason of religious creed, age, race, sex, color, national origin, ancestry, or disability. Any applicant or customer of OVR who believes he or she is being discriminated against may contact OVR at the following address:

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
1521 North Sixth Street
Harrisburg, PA 17102
Telephone 1-800-442-6351
1-800-233-3008 TTY

Allentown BVRS

45 North Fourth Street • Allentown, PA 18102
(610) 821-6441 Voice • 1-800-922-9536 Voice • (610) 821-6144 TTY • 1-888-377-9207 TTY

Altoona BVRS

1130 12th Avenue • Suite 500 • Altoona, PA 16601
(814) 946-7240 Voice/TTY • 1-800-442-6343 Voice • 1-866-320-7955 TTY

Altoona BBVS

1130 12th Avenue • Suite 300 • Altoona, PA 16601
(814) 946-7330 Voice • 1-866-695-7673 Voice • (814) 949-7956 TTY • 1-866-320-7956 TTY

DuBois BVRS

199 Beaver Drive • DuBois, PA 15801
(814) 371-7340 Voice • 1-800-922-4017 Voice/TTY • (814) 371-7505 TTY

Erie BVRS

3200 Lovell Place • Erie, PA 16503
(814) 871-4551 Voice • 1-800-541-0721 Voice • (814) 871-4535 TTY • 1-888-217-1710 TTY

Erie BBVS

3100 Lovell Place • Erie, PA 16503
(814) 871-4401 Voice • 1-866-521-5073 Voice • (814) 871-4599 TTY • 1-888-884-5513 TTY

Harrisburg BVRS

Forum Place • 555 Walnut St. • 8th Floor • Harrisburg, PA 17101
(717) 787-7834 Voice • 1-800-442-6352 Voice • (717) 787-4013 TTY • 1-877-497-6545 TTY

Harrisburg BBVS

Forum Place • 555 Walnut St. • 8th Floor • Harrisburg, PA 17101
(717) 787-7500 Voice • 1-866-375-8264 Voice • (717) 787-1733 TTY • 1-888-575-9420 TTY

Johnstown BVRS

727 Goucher Street • Section 10 • Johnstown, PA 15905
(814) 255-6771 Voice • 1-800-762-4223 Voice • (814) 255-5510 TTY • 1-866-862-6891 TTY

New Castle BVRS

100 Margaret Street • New Castle, PA 16101
(724) 656-3070 Voice • 1-800-442-6379 Voice • (724) 656-3252 TTY • 1-888-870-4476 TTY

Norristown BVRS

1875 New Hope Street • Norristown, PA 19401
(484) 250-4340 Voice • 1-800-221-1042 Voice • (484) 250-4357 TTY • 1-888-616-0470 TTY

Philadelphia BVRS

444 North Third Street • 5th Floor • Philadelphia, PA 19123
(215) 560-1900 Voice • 1-800-442-6381 Voice • (215) 560-6144 TTY • 1-800-772-9031 TTY

Philadelphia BBVS

444 North Third Street • 5th Floor • Philadelphia, PA 19123
(215) 560-5700 Voice • 1-866-631-3892 Voice • (215) 560-5725 TTY • 1-888-870-4473 TTY

Pittsburgh BVRS

217 State Office Building • 300 Liberty Avenue • Pittsburgh, PA 15222
(412) 392-4950 Voice • 1-800-442-6371 Voice • (412) 392-5921 TTY • 1-888-870-4474 TTY

Pittsburgh BBVS

1075 Kossman Building • 400 Stanwix Street • Pittsburgh, PA 15222
(412) 565-5240 Voice • 1-866-412-4072 Voice • (412) 565-5509 TTY • 1-877-255-5082 TTY

Reading BVRS

1090 Commons Boulevard • Reading, PA 19605
(610) 916-2316 Voice • 1-800-442-0949 Voice • (610) 916-8965 TTY • 1-877-475-7326 TTY

Washington BVRS

201 West Wheeling Street • Washington, PA 15301
(724) 223-4430 Voice/TTY • 1-800-442-6367 Voice/TTY

Wilkes-Barre BVRS

300 G Laird Street • Wilkes-Barre, PA 18702
(570) 826-2011 Voice • 1-800-634-2060 Voice • (570) 826-2023 TTY • 1-888-651-6117 TTY

Wilkes-Barre BBVS

300 G Laird Street • Wilkes-Barre, PA 18702
(570) 826-2361 Voice • 1-866-227-4163 Voice • (570) 826-2023 TTY • 1-888-651-6117 TTY

Williamsport BVRS

The Grit Building • Suite 102 • 208 West Third St. • Williamsport, PA 17701
(570) 327-3600 Voice • 1-800-442-6359 Voice • (570) 327-3620 TTY • 1-800-706-0884 TTY

York BVRS

2550 Kingston Road • Suite 101 • York, PA 17402
(717) 771-4407 Voice • 1-800-762-6306 Voice • (717) 771-4433 TTY • 1-866-466-1404 TTY

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HIRAM G. ANDREWS CENTER

727 Goucher Street -- Johnstown, PA 15905
(814) 255-8200 Voice • 1-800-762-4211 Voice • (814) 255-5873 TTY

www.hgac.org

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BVRS - Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

BBVS - Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services