

State of Minnesota Rehabilitation Services Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program

What High School Transition Staff Need to Know

What is the Minnesota VR Program?

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program is Minnesota's individualized employment service for persons with significant disabilities. Every year VR serves thousands of youth and young adults as they make their transition from school to work. A VR counselor is assigned to every high school in Minnesota to help people find full-time work in the regular labor market, earning the same wages and benefits as anyone else.

How do I connect with VR in our school?

Each fall, a VR counselor will contact appropriate school staff to establish a calendar for meeting with students and work out a mutually acceptable plan for communicating with staff and students.

When should I refer a student to VR?

A high school student with a disability that affects his or her ability to plan and prepare for work should have the opportunity to learn about VR services. The best time for a VR referral is usually about two years before graduation, typically near the beginning of the junior year. If a student with a disability is planning to leave school before graduating – or has dropped out – an immediate referral to the school's VR counselor makes good sense.

How do I make a referral?

VR counselors will create a regular schedule for visiting the school and meeting students. Consult the procedures established with your school for more details. School staff may contact the school's assigned VR counselor to discuss a referral; indeed it is often imperative that VR and school staff work together with a student to create a plan for future success. Don't worry if you don't know whether a student is eligible for VR; that's the purpose of a referral.



What is VR eligibility based on?

- **Documentation** of a physical or mental condition that causes a *substantial impediment* to employment
- Evidence that the individual *requires* VR services in order to prepare for, secure, obtain, or retain employment
- The presumption that the individual is able to *benefit* from VR services

What documentation is needed?

Documentation of a disability is usually obtained from the student's school assessment or from a psychological report or a medical provider's statement/ records. If the student is not able to provide this documentation, the VR counselor will obtain it (with written consent).

What if a disability is suspected, but not documented?

School staff may want to refer a student who does not have an IEP/ IIP/ 504 plan, or who may not have been diagnosed with a qualifying condition. In such cases, consult with the VR counselor assigned to your school. VR may provide diagnostic services to determine eligibility, at no cost to the student's family or the school.

What are some common VR services?

VR services are individualized for each student. They include helping students to set employment goals and identify the steps and services necessary for achieving their goals. Common services might include interest and ability testing, informational interviewing or career exploration services. A student's written plan might call for on-the-job-training, or for a degree program at a two-year or four-year college. Other services include payment for materials and equipment, assistive technology, job placement, and job seeking skills training.

Are there costs for VR services?

There is no charge for determining a student's eligibility, for counseling, job placement and most other VR services. For some purchased services, financial participation based on family income may apply.

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Can VR pay for transition services while a student is still in high school?

The student's needs and the terms of the IEP/ IIP/ 504 plan and VR employment plan should drive service decisions. Minnesota's secondary schools are required to provide a student's transition services while the student remains in school. Therefore, VR does not typically fund services until the student graduates. However, in some cases it may be appropriate to provide a VR service before graduation. Sharing of such costs can be discussed.

What can I do to collaborate effectively with VR?

Because ongoing communication between school staff and VR is important for student success, VR should be invited to all IEP and IIP meetings of their eligible students. The earlier VR is notified of a meeting, the greater the likelihood they will be able to attend.

Do students have choices?

VR staff work with each student and their IEP team to create an individualized employment plan that helps students make informed choices about their job goals and to identify which services are needed and who will provide them. Students may decide to develop plans on their own or with the help of someone of their choosing. But it is important to know that VR must approve these plans prior to VR purchasing services.

What is VR's data practices policy in the high schools?

VR can receive names of students that a school would like to refer for a VR orientation as well as perform orientation sessions with students without written consent. (An orientation is when VR staff meets with students to provide basic information about VR services.)

However...

- VR must have a copy of written consent from a student (and parent/ guardian where appropriate) in order to speak with school staff about a student's personal information (this includes getting/releasing information in an IEP meeting).
- VR must have a signed Tennessee Notice from a student (and parent/ guardian where appropriate) to obtain personal information from them.

How do I find out more?

You can always learn the name and telephone number of the VR counselor assigned to a school by calling 1.800.328.9095, or 651.296.5616, TTY 1.800.657.3973, or TTY 651.296.3900, or by logging on to www.deed.state.mn.us/rehab/transition.