

# TOOLKIT FOR EMPLOYMENT SUCCESS



**New Hampshire**  
**Vocational Rehabilitation**  
New Hampshire Department of Education

## **Welcome to New Hampshire Vocational Rehabilitation!**

New Hampshire Vocational Rehabilitation (NHVR) is committed to assisting individuals with disabilities to maximize their employment potential and options. If you are found eligible for NHVR services, we can help you determine the career path that is right for you, based on your strengths, interests, and abilities. We also work closely with business partners to ensure they have the education, awareness of tools, and information to make hiring, training, and retaining individuals with disabilities a seamless process. This toolkit has been designed to help you learn more about NHVR, the process, and the services that the agency provides to our customers.

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# IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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## Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is here for you if...

- You have a disability that is making it difficult for you to obtain or maintain employment.
- You need some specific services to obtain employment.
- You want to work to the best of your capacity or advance in your career field.
- You are ready to make informed choices for your vocational future.

## Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is not the place for you if...

- You don't have a disability.
- You don't want to work.
- You want VR to help you get disability exemption.
- You came here to get other services like food stamps or housing.
- You are being mandated to be here and you do not want to be here.

## Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) can...

- Help you find out what your interests and abilities are, so you can determine your best career path.
- Help you figure out what barriers to employment you may have.
- Assist you in finding ways to overcome barriers that are keeping you from your successful career path.
- Help you identify services and skills you need to find and maintain employment and how to obtain those services.

# VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROCESS

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**Referral for Services:** Individuals, schools, parents, physicians, area agencies, mental health centers can all refer an individual for services by contacting the local VR office.

**Application for Services:** People who want services from VR must complete an application for services.

**Intake & Eligibility Process:** New customers to NHVR will meet with a counselor for an intake interview. If you have not already signed an application, you can complete one at this time. This meeting is to begin to gather information needed to determine your eligibility for NHVR services. The Agency works to determine your eligibility within 60 days of receiving your application.

People who are eligible for services are those who:

- Have a physical or mental impairment
- Have a substantial impediment to employment
- Require VR services to become employed

**Order of Selection:** When NHVR does not have enough funding or staff, a process called Order of Selection goes into effect. A person who is determined eligible will be placed on a waiting list based on determination of the level of significance of their disability. People with the most significant disabilities will be served first as resources become available.

**Comprehensive Assessment:** During this step participants may be asked to complete further evaluations to determine what job or career field best suits their interests and abilities.

**Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE):** Once eligible for services, the participant and counselor will prepare an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).

The plan will include:

- Your vocational goal
- Specific services that will be provided
- Costs of services and who will pay for them
- Strategies to evaluate if you are on track to reach your goal

**Services:** Vocational Rehabilitation services may include:

- training such as on-the-job training, technical training, and post-secondary education
- job search assistance
- books, supplies, tools
- assistive technology
- orientation and mobility
- other necessary services for successful employment

**Job Placement & Successful Employment:** When you reach your employment goal and have been working at least 90 days, you will be considered successfully employed and VR will close your file. However you may reapply as needed.

**Post-Employment Services:** Post-Employment services may be provided after your VR file has been closed to help you maintain your job.



# STEP 1

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## Referral for Services Process

Anyone can refer someone for NHVR services. This includes individuals, parents, school, physicians, and others. To make a referral, the person making the referral would contact the local VR office and office staff would take basic information needed to begin the VR process. Please refer to the back of this toolkit for local office contact information.

## Application for Services

***At your first meeting, your VR counselor will talk with you about:***

- Your strengths and abilities
- Your employment history
- Your education history
- Your interests and goals for the future
- Services you may need to gain or maintain employment
- Information about your family, your income, and benefits, etc.
- What services we have and what VR is all about
- Your disability and medical history
- Your barriers to employment

If you have not already applied for VR services, you can apply for services in the office with the VR counselor's assistance or you can take the information home to think about it and complete the application yourself.

***If you want to apply for services, VR will:***

Need documentation of your disability/disabilities from a medical provider and other relevant contacts for documentation supporting your eligibility. If you have this information it is helpful for you to bring this information to your initial appointment.

If you do not have disability documentation, VR may ask you to sign a release of information form so that information can be obtained from doctors, schools, and other relevant contacts to determine your eligibility.

If needed, set up appointments with doctors, psychologists, or evaluators to help us learn more about your abilities and your disabilities.

**Please note that it is your responsibility to attend the appointments or to call us if you cannot attend so the appointment can be re-scheduled.**

## STEP 2

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### Intake and Eligibility

Once you have completed the application, you will meet with a counselor for an intake interview to get to know you and determine your eligibility.

***People eligible for services are those who ...***

- have a physical or mental impairment
- have a substantial impediment to employment, and
- require Vocational Rehabilitation services to become employed, maintain employment, or advance in employment

***People receiving SSI or SSDI benefits who want to work are presumed eligible for VR services.***

### Order of Selection

When NHVR does not have enough funding or staff, a process called Order of Selection goes into effect. A person who is determined to be eligible for NHVR services will be put on a wait-list. The wait-list is ordered by a person's level of disability and their application date. In an Order of Selection, people with the most significant disabilities will be served first when funds are available.

After your eligibility has been determined, you will be assigned an Order of Selection category. There are three categories.

- Category 1; Individuals with the most significant disabilities
- Category 2; Individuals with significant disabilities
- Category 3; Individuals with less significant disabilities



Categories are based on functional limitations in the following areas: mobility, motor skills, communication, interpersonal skills, work tolerance, work skills, self-direction, and self-care. Once identified the category of significance is chosen and your case is placed on the waitlist (if applicable). As VR has financial resources to assist individuals in a category they are released from the waitlist and begin receiving services.

VR will pay for any assessments necessary to determine your eligibility and your Order of Selection category unless you have other comparable benefits to pay for this service.

*It is your responsibility to attend all appointments.*

## STEP 3

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### ***Comprehensive Assessment***

You are about to participate in a program that can change your life. What you get out of it depends on what you put into it. VR is a partnership between you and your VR counselor.

#### ***The first thing you and your VR counselor will do is talk about:***

- Your strengths, interests, abilities, and values
- Your understanding of the world of work
- Occupations that may be suitable for you
- Opportunities based on your career goals and work history
- Education or training programs available and what is needed to get into them
- What barriers you have and how to work with or around them

#### ***During this step you may be asked to:***

- Complete further evaluations to help determine what professions best suit your interests and abilities
- Conduct labor market research to determine if your chosen career has employment opportunities available in your area
- Identify any additional barriers and what services might aid in this area

## STEP 4

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### Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)

VR services are built around ***informed choices***. You and your VR counselor will discuss a great deal of information and a number of options.

***The options for developing all or part of the IPE include the following:***

- You may choose to have assistance from the VR counselor, to the extent determined appropriate by the individual; or
- You may choose to receive assistance from the VR program or other program representatives selected by the individual; or
- The individual without assistance.

***Working together, you will identify a career path that reflects your strengths, interests, abilities, and values.***

- You and your VR counselor will write an ***Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)***.
- Your plan will be based on your strengths, interests, abilities, values, and current job market opportunities.
- You and your VR counselor will plan the steps you need to take to reach your employment goals.
- You and your counselor will write down all the services you will need to achieve your employment goals.
- Your IPE will specify when to start and stop services and who will provide them.
- Your IPE will also detail how much the service or services will cost and who will pay for what services.
- Services paid for by VR ***must be authorized before they begin.***
- It is important that you stay in touch with your VR counselor when something happens that might change the course of your IPE.
- You and your VR counselor must agree that the goal is right for you and achievable for the current job market.



## STEP 5

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### Services

VR offers many types of services. Your plan is customized to suit your needs and abilities. The services that are a part of your IPE are what you need to achieve your employment goal.

VR does not take a “cookie cutter” approach to services. Someone else may receive a service that you will not. Your VR counselor will work with you to determine what services are specific to your needs.

### Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) and Transition Services

As part of the transition process, NHVR collaborates with schools, families, and other community partners in support of students with disabilities and their move on to life after high school.

In addition to the traditional services that are provided to students with disabilities NHVR provides Pre-employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS). Pre-ETS are designed to help potentially eligible students with disabilities between the ages of 14-21 to learn more about preparing for life after high school and its important connection to employment.

One of the ways Pre-ETS are provided is through various workshops across the state at local high schools or community-based events. Workshops are led by a regional Student Transition Specialist and cover the following topic areas:

- Job Exploration Counseling
- Counseling on Comprehensive Transition and Post-Secondary Programs.
- Self-Advocacy
- Workplace Readiness Training
- Work-based Learning

In order to receive Pre-ETS services, participating students do not need to be eligible for NHVR services.

## Transition Services

Transition services are provided to students and youth with disabilities between the ages of 14-21 who have been determined eligible to receive NHVR services. Students will meet with their VR counselor at their high school or at the VR office.

### ***These services may include:***

- Vocational guidance and counseling including interest inventories.
- Recommendations for career path preparation based upon the student's interests and strengths.
- Soft skill development, job seeking skills, job shadowing, informational interviews and work-based learning opportunities.
- Driver assessments and evaluations.

Students develop an Individual Plan for Employment in collaboration with their VR counselor. Services are designed to help students to achieve their employment goals, and are based upon their interests, needs, and skills.

## College or Technical School

You and your counselor will talk about your abilities to determine if college or technical school is right for you. If so, you will work together to determine what colleges or training programs offer the type of education you are seeking.

### ***When Choosing a College or Technical School, it is Important to Think About:***

- Will there be jobs in the field you want and in the location you want?
- How long can you afford to stay out of the work force?
- How will you invest in the program yourself?
- What do your abilities say about your chances to succeed in college?
- What services are available at college to help you succeed despite your disability?
- Are you willing to move in order to attend college or get work after college?
- How supportive is your family about you attending college?
- How committed will you be in terms of time to spend succeeding in college?

### ***If you and your counselor agree that College or Technical School is necessary to achieve your vocational goals, here is what you will need to do:***

- Apply for admission.
- Apply for financial aid.
- Meet with the school to determine what their placement rate is in the field you are interested in.
- Meet with the school to talk with Student Services if you need accommodations in the classroom.
- Let VR know of your admission status.
- Bring in your financial aid award letter as soon as you get it.
- Meet with your VR counselor to determine what assistance is needed from VR.

***Vocational Rehabilitation will not be able to help you with the expense of College or Technical School Programs if:***

- You are in default of a past student loan until you have made arrangements to repay and have shown good-faith effort to remove the default.
- You have no “unmet financial need” based on the information provided by the school and the VR Financial Aid Transmittal Form (FATF). (If you are under 25, you are most likely going to be determined a “dependent student” and your parents’ income will be counted.)
- You have not maintained an agreed-upon grade point average that meets the school’s requirement each semester.

***College or Technical School is not for everyone, some people:***

- Do not have the time.
- Don’t want to attend college or technical school.
- Learn better in other ways.
- Find it difficult to attend college because of family or other financial obligations.

It is also important to know that some jobs will not require a college or technical degree. Your counselor can work with you to find out if there is a better way to learn skills to become employed such as:

- On-the-job training.
- Seminars or class training.
- Working with an adult learning center to improve on specific skills.
- Working one-on-one with a trainer to learn a specific job skill.

## **Self-employment**

Self-employment is an option some people consider. There are many things to think about before choosing this type of employment outcome. You and your VR counselor can discuss all the pros and cons of self-employment in depth. Here are some things you need to think about.

- What skills do I have?
- What services do I provide?
- What is the competition in this location?
- How much money do I have to invest in this business?
- How will my disability impact self-employment?
- Is my family supportive?
- What business experience do I have?
- How is my credit?

***If you decide you want to pursue self-employment, you will have a lot of work to do! You will:***

- Participate in assessment activities to look at whether you have the interests, skills, abilities, commitment, and resources necessary to be successful as a self-employed individual.
- Explore whether you have a viable business idea and a market for your business.
- Develop a business plan or business proposal.
- Put your plan into place.

*This option will take time, commitment, personal energy, and finances on your part. But, if you and your VR counselor feel it is the right option, VR will work with you to help you succeed. VR financial assistance is never guaranteed and depends on the nature of the business, what you have done to invest in yourself, and what other funds are available to you.*

## **Home-based Employment**

Some individuals choose to work from home-based employment. This should not be confused with self-employment. It is considered home-based employment if you are working from home performing job duties as an employee for someone else. Home-based business is not a good option if you do not have family support, if you do not have the discipline to make yourself work at specific hours, or if you have distractions at home such as small children.

## Supported Employment

For people who need long-term supports for employment because of their disability, we have supported employment services. Supported employment means competitive employment in an integrated setting with ongoing support services for individuals with the most significant disabilities. These services are more intense in direct work with individuals who need it. It is for individuals who need substantial assistance to attain, learn, and maintain a job.

## STEP 6

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### *Job Placement and Successful Employment*

When you are ready to work, VR will assist you in finding a job in the manner that works best for you. Some people prefer to conduct job searches and complete applications on their own. Others may ask for the counselor's help or work with a community rehabilitation provider (CRP).

### **Some of the ways VR can help include:**

- Developing resumes
- Preparing for interviews
- Assisting with job search
- Job Shadows
- Business tours
- Internships
- Making referrals to employers
- At your request, VR can also make direct contact with employers to discuss employment-related issues.

When you are working VR will keep your case open for at least 90 days. Then, before closing the VR file, both you and your VR counselor must agree that everything is satisfactory and that you are doing well in your job.



## **Job Accommodations**

VR can help you determine if there are special accommodations you need to find or keep your current job. Perhaps you are having problems learning the job, learning new job-related tasks, or a disability is making your job difficult. You and your VR counselor can discuss what problems you are having and what to do about it. Some of the things that will be discussed:

- Job coaching, if you are having problems learning your job or learning new things on your job.
- Assistive technology, such as magnifiers, hearing aids, or different computer screens that might make your job easier.
- Scooters or stools that might make it easier for you to perform your job.
- On-the-job training to help you learn new skills for a different job if you can no longer do the one that you used to do.
- Working with your employer to determine what will work best for both of you on the job.

## **STEP 7**

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### **Post-Employment Services**

Post-Employment services may be provided after your file is closed if you need short-term assistance to maintain your job. Be sure to call your VR counselor if you think you might need these services.

## **RESOLVING ISSUES AND CONCERNS**

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If you disagree with any Agency decision you may explore any of the following options:

- Bring the concern to the VR counselor in an attempt to resolve the issue at the lowest level.

- Request assistance from the office's Supervisor.
- **Client Assistance Program (CAP):** CAP is an independently administered program at the Governor's Commission on Disability.

121 South Fruit Street, Suite 101  
Concord, NH 03301  
(603) 271-2773 (Voice) or 271-2774 (TTY).

The **(CAP)** staff can explain how the VR system works, advise you on your rights and responsibilities, suggest ways to work more successfully with your counselor, and help you prepare for any appeals or hearings. The Client Assistance Program (CAP) is available to assist and advocate for you whenever you are dissatisfied with any action or inaction on the part of VR or other programs we are working with. You may request help from the Client Assistance Program at any time. Call if you have questions, concerns, or problems with your eligibility or with services you would like or are receiving. If you call, the Client Assistance Program will work with you to resolve your problem. Client Assistance will offer advice and provide you with help. Should it be necessary, the Client Assistance Program can also assist you with mediation or a Fair Hearing.

Or you may request mediation or a formal review. (Described below)

***Review Process:***

You may request a review of any decision made by VR that affects the provision of VR services.

***Mediation:***

You have the option to request mediation to resolve disputes involving agency determinations that affect the provision of vocational rehabilitation services. It is available as a voluntary option by agreement of both parties. A mediation session is conducted by a trained attorney with knowledge of state and federal VR laws. Requests must be made in writing and should be sent to:

*Office of Legislation and Hearings, Department of Education,  
101 Pleasant Street, Concord, NH 03301.*

### **Formal Review:**

You may request a more formal review of any decision with which you disagree. A fair hearing involves an attorney who will hear evidence and testimony by you or your representative and the Agency and make a formal decision. A request for a fair hearing needs to be in writing and describe the complaint. Written requests must be made within 30 days after the agency notifies you of its determination or after completing mediation and should be sent to:

*Office of Legislation and Hearings, Department of Education,  
101 Pleasant Street, Concord, NH 03301.*

## **CUSTOMER RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

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As a customer of Vocational Rehabilitation you have a number of rights and responsibilities. Following is a description of your key rights and responsibilities followed by a brief discussion in some instances.

- You have the ***right to be treated with courtesy and respect***. In return, VR asks that you extend that same courtesy and respect to others.
- You have the ***right to services without discrimination*** on the basis of race, color, religion, marital status, national/ethnic origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, or disability. You will not be discriminated against in any matter related to receiving a service, financial assistance, or other assistance under the VR program.
- You have the ***right for your case file information to remain confidential***.
- Your records will not be shared without your permission. If VR needs medical or other information, we will ask you to sign a release form so we can get that information. If you are eighteen years old or older and you want someone from your family to be able to talk with your VR counselor, you will need to sign a release for that family member.

- You have a **responsibility to inform** your VR counselor about other agencies or programs you have worked with who may have information that would be helpful in planning your services, and to sign a release of information form so VR can contact them.
- You have both the **right and the responsibility to participate in the planning and development of your vocational goal and rehabilitation.**
- It is important that you make your desires known and that you talk with your counselor anytime you think your program needs adjusting.
- You have the **right to make informed choices** regarding your employment goal and services. You also have the **responsibility to discuss the pros and cons of your choices** and to come to an agreement with your VR counselor about the services you will receive.
- You have the **right to timely services** needed to achieve your employment goal.
- To help in receiving timely services, you have a **responsibility to stay in touch with your VR counselor, keep appointments, and follow through on your IPE.** It is also important to report any changes in address, telephone number, medical condition, or other major changes affecting you.
- You have the **right to appeal any decision.**
- You have the **right to work with the Client Assistance Program (CAP)** if you need information or help to resolve any issue or a concern you may have. If you think you might want to work with CAP, it will be your **responsibility to contact** them.
- You have the **right to review** information in your case file.
- If you wish to review your case file, **it is your responsibility to give VR advance notice** so the information can be ready for you.
- You have the **right to request a different** counselor.

- Before requesting a change in VR counselors, you have a ***responsibility to attempt to work out any differences*** between you and your counselor. However, if that fails, please talk to your counselor's supervisor about the difficulty you are having and your desire to change counselors.
- You have the ***right to be consulted*** before your VR file is closed.

## NOTES

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# SCHEDULER

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Date of Visit	Counselor/Customer Activities	Comments	Appointment Times

## RESOURCE LIST

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Contact	Agency	Phone/email

**Berlin Regional Office**

650 Main Street, Suite 110  
Berlin, NH 03570  
Toll Free: 1-888-300-9550  
Tel: 603-752-2271 (Voice or TTY)  
Fax: 603-752-5940

**Concord Regional Office**

21 South Fruit Street, Suite 20  
Concord, NH 03301  
Toll Free: 1-800-299-1647  
Tel: 603-271-2327 (Voice or TTY)  
Fax: 603-271-7095

**Keene Regional Office**

149 Emerald Street, Suite T  
Keene, NH 03431  
Toll Free: 1-800-620-7688  
Tel: 603-357-0266 (Voice or TTY)  
Fax: 603-352-1391

**Manchester Regional Office**

One Sundial Avenue, Suite 201 N  
Manchester, NH 03103  
Toll Free: 1-800-627-9304  
Tel: 603-669-8733 (Voice or TTY)  
Fax: 603-668-2640

**Nashua Regional Office**

One Sundial Avenue, Suite 201 N  
Manchester, NH 03103  
Toll Free: 1-800-635-9614  
Tel: 603-889-6844 (Voice or TTY)  
Fax: 603-889-2292

**Portsmouth Regional Office**

215 Commerce Way, Suite 3  
Portsmouth, NH 03801  
Toll Free: 1-800-882-2744  
Tel: 603-436-8884 (Voice or TTY)  
Fax: 603-427-6910

**Services for Blind and Visually Impaired**

21 South Fruit Street, Suite 20  
Concord, NH 03301  
Toll Free: 1-800-581-6881  
Tel: 603-271-3537  
Tel: 603-271-3471 (Voice or TTY)  
Fax: 603-271-3816

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