

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

Several programs exist to assist individuals with disabilities with employment opportunities and job placement. The state-operated vocational rehabilitation program is a primary resource. It ensures that millions of Americans with one or more physical or mental disabilities are given the right to pursue meaningful employment.

The law

According to Title 29 of the U.S. Code, Chapter 16, increased employment of individuals with disabilities can be achieved through the implementation of statewide workforce development systems to include comprehensive and coordinated programs of vocational rehabilitation.

Vocational rehabilitation services

Each state has a federally funded agency that operates a comprehensive vocational rehabilitation program designed to provide counseling, evaluation and job placement services for eligible individuals with disabilities. State-operated programs vary widely, but each program is designed to provide services that enable individuals to pursue meaningful employment and increase their integration into the workplace.

Services can include:

- Assessment to determine eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs
- Vocational and other types of post-secondary education and training
- Rehabilitation technology services, such as enlarged print or raised desks for wheelchairs
- Job accommodations, such as a reader, a travel assistant or help with heavy lifting
- Employer education on disability issues
- Physical and mental rehabilitation services, such as eye exams, speech therapy and treatment for mental health issues
- Transportation related to vocational rehabilitation services
- Transition services to assist students with disabilities with the transition from school to work

Eligibility

Individuals must meet the following eligibility standards:

- Have a physical, mental, emotional or learning disability that is a barrier to getting a job
- Need vocational rehabilitation services to get, keep or regain employment
- Be able to benefit from the services provided

Individuals who receive Supplemental Security Income or Social Security Disability Insurance are considered eligible, unless they are too significantly disabled to benefit from vocational rehabilitation services.

However, not everyone who is eligible will receive services. Each case is reviewed individually and treated on a case-by-case basis.

Application process

The application process varies between states, but to apply, individuals must submit a written application, which includes a request for vocational rehabilitation services and sufficient information for the vocational rehabilitation agency to determine eligibility.

More information

The Rehabilitation Services Administration website provides an alphabetical list of every state's vocational rehabilitation agency: <https://rsa.ed.gov/about/programs/vocational-rehabilitation-state-grants/contact>

For information about the Social Security Administration's Ticket to Work program, visit www.ssa.gov/work.



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