

Youth Transition Handbook



Washington State Department of Social and Health Services
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation



Washington State
Department of Social
& Health Services

Transforming lives

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Introduction

Purpose

The Youth Transition Handbook is intended to be a technical assistance tool for transition planning. Transition is going from one period of your life to another. This handbook's focus is on high school students transitioning from high school to becoming employed.

Who is the Handbook for?

Vocational Rehabilitation [VR] staff, teachers, school counselors, school administrators, school district personnel, students with disabilities and their families, and other agencies supporting students with disabilities who want to help youth become employed.

How can they help?

- Promote collaborative planning and service delivery among vocational rehabilitation, local education agencies (LEAs), schools, and other county, state and community agencies for youth transitioning from school to work and/or post-school activities leading to employment;
- Support accessible, timely, and culturally sensitive vocational rehabilitation services for all Washington State students with disabilities;
- Encourage LEAs to develop, implement and promote pre-vocational services and career exploration for students with disabilities prior to the referral to VR; and
- Assure that vocational rehabilitation services complement and do not replace services provided by the LEAs and other agencies.

What are Transition Services?

Transition services help students prepare for life after high school. Examples of transition services include preparing students for independent living, employment, and/or post-secondary education.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation [DVR] and High Schools each provide transition services to students with disabilities. These services are planned and coordinated to meet a student's individual needs.

DVR Transition Services

Vocational rehabilitation transition services help high school students with disabilities prepare for and obtain employment. This may include vocational counseling and guidance, pre-employment transition services, benefits planning related to employment, assistive technology, post-secondary education or training, job placement, and other services leading to a permanent job. DVR services start before a student graduates from high school and continue until permanent employment is obtained after graduation.

High School Transition Services

School based transition services assist and support high school students to prepare for employment. School activities may include but are not limited to developing independent living skills, providing career exploration, community and/or school based work experiences to develop knowledge about work habits and responsibility, and academic preparation. High school transition services stop when a student graduates.

For applicable federal laws, see page 29.



Who is eligible to receive VR Transition Services?

Any youth with a disability from mild to profound may be eligible. Transition services, as defined under the Rehabilitation Act, are provided to all eligible youth with disabilities who can benefit from DVR services. This includes youth within the special education system, as well as youth within the general education system. Youth with disabilities who are transitioning from state and local juvenile rehabilitation institutions and community programs also may be eligible for VR transition services.

Students who receive VR transition services are often eligible for an Individual Education Program [IEP] or a 504 Plan in the school setting. There may be other students with medical or emotional conditions who may also qualify for VR services.



Examples of the range of possibilities include but are not limited to students with:

- mild conditions such as a hearing loss, a speech impairment, asthma/allergies, physical limitations that preclude them from some activities, emotional or mental health conditions,
- an impairment in social interactions;
- learning disabilities;
- cognitive limitations;
- intellectual disabilities;
- students who need reasonable accommodations to participate in classroom and learning activities [a 504 Plan];
- a mental health diagnosis and
- students that schools identify as high risk who may have disabilities not yet identified.



Under the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 2014, a youth is eligible to receive vocational rehabilitation services if:

- He or she has a physical, mental or sensory impairment that results in a substantial barrier to employment; **and**
- He or she needs VR services to prepare for, get or keep a job that matches their strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities and interests; **and**
- He or she is capable of working as a result of receiving VR services.

There is a presumption of eligibility for DVR services, if the student is currently receiving and/or is entitled to Supplemental Security Income (**SSI**) and/or Social Security Disability Insurance (**SSDI**) benefits for disability or blindness and intends to become employed. DVR is required to verify disability status and identify functional limitations.

In other words, a person must have a disability that interferes with the ability to work and must need vocational rehabilitation services to obtain or maintain employment. **A person is presumed to be able to become employed unless VR has clear and convincing evidence that the person cannot become employed.**

Services for

Carmen

Carmen is 19. She's been in special education courses since the sixth grade and now has a three-month-old daughter. Several credits short of high school graduation, she began working with a local vocational rehabilitation counselor. Through the counselor, Carmen was able to access a vocational evaluation and then chose a course of study to become a certified nursing assistant.

The special education training specialist who works with her was able to arrange short-term skills training which allowed Carmen to obtain that certification. Because Carmen met the financial need criteria, Vocational Rehabilitation paid for her certification exam and work clothing required for employment.

Her teacher helped her with getting graduation credits with some of her vocational and independent living activities and by providing tutoring. The vocational rehabilitation counselor referred her to a mental health program to help Carmen address barriers to employment related to her emotional disorder and with transitioning from school to work and being a parent. That counselor also helped her find assistance in paying for child care and job placement.

When do VR Transition Services begin?

The DVR counselor comes into a student's life when the youth is between ages 16-21 years. Generally, the DVR counselor begins serving a student during the junior (second to last) year of high school. The student must be ready and available to actively engage in DVR services. This includes activities necessary to establish an employment goal, develop an employment plan, and participate in vocational rehabilitation services that are required to become employed.



The federal Rehabilitation Act, as amended in 2014, prohibits DVR from providing or paying for any transition services that are considered to be special education or related services that schools are required to provide.

DVR services begin before a student graduates from high school and continue after graduation until the youth achieves their employment goal.

- While a student is attending high school, DVR may provide pre-employment transition services and other vocational rehabilitation services that are not otherwise the school's responsibility. Depending on a student's disability-barriers to employment and their DVR employment plan, the following services may be provided:
 - Job exploration counseling;
 - Work-based learning experiences outside the school setting, including internships, after-school volunteer activities, and other experiences;

Unconfusing IEP and IPE

IEP = Individual Education Program

IPE = Individualized Plan for Employment

Both VR and the school districts aim to have the VR employment plan developed and approved before the student leaves high school. This plan is called the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). For special education students the IPE is coordinated with the student's IEP. The IPE is developed prior to school exit. It can be implemented before the end of high school, but generally it is not.

- Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in post-secondary education and training; Workplace readiness training;
 - Instruction in self-advocacy, including peer mentoring; and
 - Other VR services required to achieve an employment goal.
- If a student is not employed when they graduate, DVR continues to assist the youth in achieving their employment goal. This assures a smooth transition from high school to permanent employment. The VR services a youth receives after they graduate typically focus on job placement and any post-secondary education or training that may be required.

A primary role of the DVR counselor is to provide vocational rehabilitation counseling and guidance that assist students with disabilities to make informed choices about their job goals and career paths in to adulthood. The counselor also provides consultation and technical assistance to the schools to plan for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including vocational rehabilitation.

DVR counselors visit schools to share information about vocational rehabilitation with students with disabilities, teachers, parents, and/or school counselors. When appropriate and feasible, the VR counselor may participate in a student's Individualized Education Program [IEP] meeting. If requested a VR counselor also attends other activities such as family nights, transition fairs, etc.

What's next?

Developing the employment goal

First the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) makes sure the student is eligible for VR services. Then the student works with the VRC to identify a job goal. The student may participate in various vocational assessments, pre-employment transition services, and other activities. Once the job goal is agreed upon, an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) is developed. It identifies steps and services needed to reach the goal.

If post-secondary education or training is required to achieve the job goal, DVR is required to look at comparable benefits and will ask the student to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) available on-line at <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov>. This application is mandatory at any college if a person wants to be considered for financial aid, work study, and/or loans. The college financial aid office is a good place to learn about scholarships and grants that might be available. All DVR services must be directly related to an employment goal.

What is the Referral Process for VR?

Who makes the referral?

Referral to VR may be initiated by anyone at any time. Typically, referrals come from the public schools, the student, a family member, a county developmental disabilities program, a community agency, or another state agency such as a Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) case manager. Students referred to VR may be participants in special, career and technical, or general education programs.

For a School Referral: The Transition Specialist/Coordinator, Special Education Teacher or 504 Plan Coordinator would send the following to the nearest DVR office:

- The most recent comprehensive psychological or psycho-educational evaluation report
- Medical and specialty evaluation reports such as adaptive behavior, mobility, speech and language, hearing, mental health assessment and treatment plan, drug and alcohol records, etc.
- The last two IEPs (for historical perspective)
- The 504 plan, if applicable
- School transcripts, if appropriate
- Vocational assessment results, including functional vocational evaluation
- Career interest/aptitude testing results
- Information regarding a young adult's prevocational and vocational activities through the school, including community experiences and school-to-career activities
- PSAT/SAT results
- Other available assessments, plans or information as deemed appropriate

For a Parental referral: see DVR's website (www.dshs.wa.gov/dvr) for a list of offices near you or call 1-800-637-5627 (Voice/TTY).

Then what happens?

The process for referring students to VR continues with the VRC discussing the potential referral with the student/family. If the discussion results in a decision to formally apply for VR services, the VRC gathers documents to establish the student's eligibility. The records may come from the schools and/or private medical providers. The school or VR may request written parental consent for the release of documentation of their child's disability and adaptive behavior.

Generally new referrals are invited to attend a DVR orientation at the local office. In most rural areas we do individual orientation and intake. If the student is in school DVR coordinates with the school and provides those services on site.

Working with all involved, the VR Counselor will identify and coordinate any diagnostic assessments needed to determine eligibility and plan for VR services.

Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Several Tribes in Washington State have Tribal American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services programs (AIVRS or TVR) federally funded through Section 121 of the Rehabilitation Act. They provide services to American Indians with disabilities who are seeking employment, enrolled in a federally recognized tribe and living on or near a reservation in the service area of one of the TVR programs.

Tribal VR programs are able to provide cultural resources to American Indians with disabilities in their path to employment. They understand how to integrate indigenous values and practices into helping Native youth transition. AIVRS is comparable to Washington State VR services with the use of additional tribal resources and other culturally related services that strengthen and support American Indians with disabilities in achieving their employment goal.

An enrolled tribal member living on or near a reservation in the service area of a TVR program has the choice of receiving services from either a Tribal VR program or from the Washington State VR program or both. TVR programs can work with both public and tribal schools as well as work side by side with DVR's transition liaison for the high school. Contact information for Washington State TVR programs is found at the end of this handbook.



Department of Services for the Blind

Washington State's Department of Services for the Blind (DSB) provides "one front door" for people of all ages who are blind or have low vision in the state of Washington. All students who are blind or visually impaired, age 14-years-old or older, and attend public or private schools in Washington State, may be referred for transition services to the DSB Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program. The services include: pre-plan assessment; Individual Education Program (IEP) consultation; vocational exploration; counseling and guidance; and eventual IPE (Individual Plan for Employment) development prior to high school graduation.

DSB also offers summer youth programs for students ages 9-21 to develop and strengthen their independent daily living skills, provide work experiences, and help youth build the necessary abilities to prepare for the career of their choice. In some cases, DSB and DVR may jointly serve the same individual when VR services from both agencies are needed. Contact information for DSB can be found at the end of this handbook.



Collaboration with the Developmental Disabilities Administration

DVR works closely with schools, the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) and County DD Programs to support eligible students with significant cognitive, physical and neurological impairments to make the most of their school years and achieve their employment goals.

In order to receive employment support services as adults (after age 21) from the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA), students need to have their eligibility determined by DDA. If the student is found eligible, each DDA client's service needs are determined through an assessment process and services are authorized based on identified needs. If found eligible and services are authorized, **DDA employment services begin after the student has exited school and is age 21.**

Some counties in Washington State have collaborative agreements with school districts, employment agencies and DVR to support youth with developmental disabilities to get a head start on their careers. More information can be found by contacting the county DD Programs. A website with the county contact information is here: http://www.dshs.wa.gov/pdf/adsa/ddd/county_coord.pdf.

See Developmental Disabilities Life Opportunities Trust (DDLOT) on page 44.

Services for *Charlie*

Charlie is a visually impaired 17-year-old high school junior with a learning disability. His choice to take academic classes has required intensive resource room support to achieve passing grades and he plans to graduate with his class in three semesters.

Charlie wants to attend community college and scored well on his PSAT test. But he is seeing the school counselor to discuss difficulties related to his progressive vision loss. His school referred Charlie to the **Department of Services for the Blind** for assistance with his plans and has updated his educational, vocational and vision assessments that show he is most likely to be successful in an academic setting with the support of a tutor and assistive technology.

Charlie, his parents, the Services for the Blind counselor and the school team developed Charlie's individualized education plan, which includes six weeks at the Services for the Blind residential work experience program.

When those who developed the Individualized Education Plan settle on a vocational goal, they then will work to write his Individualized Plan for Employment. He, his parents and Services for the Blind will assess his eligibility for financial assistance and college entrance requirements. When Charlie is finished with school, Services for the Blind will help him with job placement.

What are the roles and responsibilities of schools and vocational rehabilitation?

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) [Washington's State Education Agency (SEA)] and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) programs are responsible for providing transition services to students with disabilities in accordance with federal laws.

What is education's role and responsibility for IDEA eligible students?

OSPI is responsible for ensuring school districts develop Individualized Education Programs [IEPs] for all students with disabilities eligible for special education. The IEP must include transition services for students by their 16th birthday, or sooner if the IEP team chooses, and are to be developed with students and their families.

Activities while in school may include, but are not limited to, career exploration, community based work experiences, activities providing knowledge about work habits and responsibility. School districts are responsible for providing transition services for students eligible for special education. The focus is on improving the student's academic and functional achievement to help them move from school to post-school activities.

After high school activities include post-secondary education, vocational education, integrated employment, supported employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, if appropriate, and community participation.

The IEP must include applicable measurable postsecondary goals based on age appropriate transition assessments that relate to training, education, employment, and independent living skills.

Transition services must also:

- Include a course of study needed to assist the student in reaching the postsecondary goals;
- Be individualized according to the needs, strengths, preferences and interests of individual students and facilitate movement from school to students' post-school goals;
- And **might include instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.**

For more information about transition services and resources in your area please see the Center for Change in Transition Services website: <http://www.seattleu.edu/ccts>.

For "504 Eligible Students":

To be protected under Section 504 a student must:

- 1) Have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity; or
- 2) Have a record of the impairment; or
- 3) Be regarded as having the impairment.

The impairment doesn't need to prevent or severely or significantly restrict a major life activity to be considered substantially limiting. Major life activities include, but are not limited to, caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, working, eating, sleeping, standing, lifting, bending, reading, concentrating, thinking, communicating, and "major bodily functions," such as the functions of the immune system, normal cell growth, digestive, bowel, bladder, neurological, brain, respiratory, circulatory, endocrine, and reproductive functions.

For more information: <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html>

Many students who have or could benefit from a 504 plan have what are often considered “invisible” disabilities, such as Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), behavioral, emotional or mental health disabilities, or specific learning disabilities.

A 504 Plan is developed by school staff with each 504 eligible student to provide accommodations, aids and services designed to meet the individual student’s needs to the same extent as the needs of students without disabilities are met for education, school activities, etc. This is sometimes referred to as a free appropriate public education (FAPE). Federal funding is not available for the implementation of this civil rights statute. This differs from students eligible for special education, where federal funds are available.

Each school district is required to designate a staff member as the “504 Coordinator” to oversee the protection of civil rights for students with disabilities eligible for 504 services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

How to find your school district’s 504 Coordinators

Go to the list published by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction’s (OSPI) Equity and Civil Rights Office at: www.k12.wa.us/Equity/ContactList.aspx.

More general information on Section 504 may be found at:
<http://www.k12.wa.us/Equity/Families/Section504.aspx>.

What VR needs from 504 Coordinators

VR is required to annually share information about vocational rehabilitation with students eligible for VR transition services. DVR relies on school district staff to let us know which 504 eligible students may be eligible for DVR services.

In order to help 504 eligible students learn of this available resource and assist DVR comply with its requirements, the 504 Coordinator could:

- Schedule a time for the high school's DVR Transition Liaison to share information with a group of 504 eligible students;
- Hand out DVR transition brochures and this Youth Transition Handbook to 504 eligible students and their parents;
- Invite the high school's DVR Transition Liaison to make a presentation on vocational rehabilitation at a school or district staff meeting, a PTA meeting or other meetings of people who may be working with a 504 eligible student; and/or
- Seek parental written consent to share with DVR the names of 504 eligible students who may be eligible for DVR services so the DVR Transition Liaison assigned to that high school may follow up with the student.

Students with a 504 plan are involved in the VR process in the same way as other DVR consumers and can benefit from prevocational activities through the school district to help with the transition process to postsecondary activities, i.e., work, apprenticeship, college.

If a student intends to engage in post-secondary education, the school district can assist many students in this transition by ensuring that an educational evaluation has been completed after age 16. Many testing agencies, such as the College Board that provides PSAT and SAT testing require an updated evaluation when testing accommodations are requested. Post-secondary training programs, i.e. universities, community colleges, trade schools, often require an updated assessment in order to obtain classroom or other disability accommodations through that school's disability resource center.



VR's role and responsibility

VR must provide information about the purpose of vocational rehabilitation, eligibility requirements, application procedures, and the scope of vocational rehabilitation services available to students with disabilities, including those in special education and those eligible for a Section 504 plan.

Transition services provided by VR are individualized, and must lead to an employment outcome.

Appropriate services may include:

- Consultation and technical assistance as early as possible in the transition process to assist education providers in planning for the transition of a youth from school to post-school activities including post-secondary education, employment and vocational rehabilitation.
- Joint planning to facilitate the development and completion of the IEP.
- Determination of eligibility for VR services.
- Identification of a suitable employment outcome.
- Development and approval of an Individualized Plan for Employment [IPE] before the student leaves school.
- Provision of vocational rehabilitation services, including pre-employment transition services, as appropriate to the individual needs of the student.

Please see WAC 388-891-0600 for list of possible DVR services:

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=388-891-0600>



Many areas of services overlap and may be shared by education and vocational rehabilitation. There are also specific individual's needs that may be served by more than one VR program, such as Tribal VR and DVR, in cooperation with the student's school district.

VR encourages its staff to work with counties and school districts to ensure that youth in transition through an Extended School Year program (ESY) to age 21 have access to work experience[s] in typical work settings. **High school work experience is a strong indicator of successful employment as an adult.**

How to find your high school's DVR Transition Liaison

Go to: <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/JJRA/dvr/school-transition>. Click on your county on DVR's school transition internet page. As you scroll down the page you will find your high school and its' DVR Transition Liaison.

How to find your school district's Special Education Coordinator

Go to: <http://www.k12.wa.us/SpecialEd/publications.aspx>. Click on the "Directory: Special Education and Institutional Education Directory" link. Scroll down through the alphabetical listing of school districts to locate your local school district contact information.



Services for

Timothy

Seventeen-year-old Timothy has mild cerebral palsy. He lives in rural Washington, about an hour and a half away from the nearest Vocational Rehabilitation office.

He receives educational accommodations through what is known as the 504 plan, which is for youth with certain types of impairments. He is struggling with the physical demands of auto shop classes, so his teacher suggested he learn about other options available through vocational rehabilitation. Timothy's guidance counselor also helped him and his parents gather information on services and eligibility for them.

Instead of meeting with each family in the school district with a disabled child, a vocational rehabilitation counselor supplied special education teachers and guidance counselors with written materials they could share. Additionally, the VR counselor gives a presentation each semester at the high school's parent information night. After their attendance at the VR meeting, Timothy and his parents initiated a referral to VR. Timothy and his guidance counselor made an appointment with the VR counselor and the guidance counselor further assisted Timothy and his parents in collecting school assessment information, Timothy's medical documentation and prepared a referral packet to send to the VR counselor prior to Timothy's intake meeting.

Entitlement, civil rights and eligibility — there are important differences

Entitlements and civil rights = Automatic access to services

Students qualifying for special education services are **entitled** to the services based on the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA] of 2004. IDEA defines “special education” as “specially designed instruction that meets the unique needs of a child with a disability.”

Schools are responsible for developing 504 Plans as the basis for providing accommodations for students with disabilities so they can participate in education and school activities. This is a student civil right based on Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

Eligibility = Must qualify for services

Youth must be found **eligible** to receive services through the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. This differs from the youth’s entitlement to receive free and appropriate public education services through the school district.

Individuals who may need support from the Developmental Disabilities Administration **may apply** for **eligibility determination** at any age — **from birth on up**. Even if a family has not received support from DDA during a person’s youth, they are encouraged to consider applying for eligibility for DDA services during the teen years.

DDA funded employment services will not begin until the student has exited school and turned 21 years of age, but counties and case managers may be able to get involved at a younger age. In counties with collaborative transition projects, DDA eligibility is required.

Age matters — What every parent should know about timelines, money concerns and signatures

Why it can be beneficial for certain special education students to stay in high school until age 21:

IDEA is designed and funded for schools to educate and work with youth ages 18-21 to prepare the student for employment and/or post-secondary education. **Every year of career preparation matters and there are no other entitlement services to replace school opportunities.** Remember, the Developmental Disabilities Administration employment support begins at age 21. Try to avoid a gap between school and employment, i.e. when students leave high school before age 21. It is important to maintain continuity for students in their transition from school to their adult lives.

Often students in special education complete most of their academic requirements by age 18 and then use the school years from ages 18-21 to develop work skills, more robust independent living skills, and have a variety of work experiences that often lead to ongoing employment.

These “extra” high school years can help prepare entitled students for employment and the challenges of adulthood.

After students with the most significant disabilities find employment they may need long term supports, such as job coaching, to maintain their employment over time and/or successfully adjust to changes at the work place. These are called supported employment services. In these cases, DVR provides initial services to help a student get a job and stabilize on the job. Then extended services are provided and funded by another individual, program or agency to help a student maintain their employment.

There are multiple ways to provide extended services including private payment, social security work incentives, and funding from the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA). It is important to remember DDA employment funding can only be authorized if the young adult is age 21 or older and has exited school. All resources and strategies for long term support need to be explored.

Note: A special education student may be eligible for Extended School Year (ESY) services up to age 21 through the school district with or without having developmental disabilities.

Why it may be beneficial to have your child apply for adult Social Security disability benefits (SSI or SSDI) before their 18th birthday:

When your child applies for VR services, your whole family income will be considered when determining any financial contribution for VR services. If your child is receiving SSI or SSDI as an adult, only their income is considered. Recipients of SSI/SSDI are presumed eligible for VR services and not required to financially contribute to the VR services they receive. **When your child becomes an adult they will need to prove their eligibility for services.** They are not automatically entitled to services as may have been true while they were in high school.

Other benefits for individuals who receive SSI/SSDI may be work incentives such as a Plan to Achieve Self Sufficiency (PASS) or an Impairment Related Work Expense (IRWE) plan. Developing an applicable plan is another way individuals can pay for their own long term job coaching needs, when other extended supports are not available.

If you decide to apply for adult disability benefits, the Social Security Administration (SSA) recommends beginning the SSI/SSDI application process six months before your child's 18th birthday. Since family income and resources are considered before an SSA applicant turns 18, some benefits planners recommend beginning the application process, from two months prior to your child's 18th birthday to the first full month after someone is 18 years old.

When will a parent or legal guardian's signature be required?

For School IEP meetings: **Before your child's 18th birthday**, schools require a signed release from the student's parent or legal guardian for a VR counselor to attend that student's IEP meeting.

For Vocational Rehabilitation Services: **Before your child's 18th birthday, VR requires** a parent or legal guardian sign the necessary forms (Application for services, Consent forms). VR is required to keep a copy of guardianship papers on file. Please bring them to your first meeting with the counselor.

It may be beneficial to have your child apply for adult SSI or SSDI benefits before their 18th birthday.



What federal laws apply to transition?

Transition services are required and/or guided by these federal laws.

1. Schools are guided by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA] of 2004, <http://idea.ed.gov>.
2. Students with disabilities in schools, who do not meet the criteria for an Individual Education Program [IEP], are covered under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html>.
3. All vocational rehabilitation is guided by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/reg/narrative.html>.

1. Individuals with Disabilities [IDEA] of 2004

- Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)
- Parents Rights for Dispute Resolution under IDEA
- Student Participation

Free Appropriate Public Education

All students determined eligible to receive special education or a Section 504 Plan are entitled to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment. This means the parents of students with disabilities may not be charged for their child's education or related services, and the educational services must be appropriate and provided in conformity with the student's IEP and/or 504 Plan. To the maximum extent appropriate, students with disabilities are to be educated with students who do not have disabilities.

Students with disabilities are entitled to FAPE while in K – 12 schooling. This differs from post-secondary programs and activities where entitlements usually do not exist. **Parents** familiar with their child being entitled to education services **are often surprised when adult services** such as VR require proof of eligibility and may **require parents to contribute financially** for some of the services their child receives.

Parents rights for dispute resolution under IDEA

IDEA provides procedures for resolving disputes between parents and schools regarding educational services to students with disabilities; this includes transition services. Dispute procedures include voluntary mediation, federal complaint processes, and due process hearings. Informed parents can help insure their child is receiving all of the support to which they are entitled.

Student participation

Beginning at the age of 16 (or younger if determined appropriate by the IEP team), the school district must invite students to attend IEP meetings whenever transition services are discussed. If a student is not able to attend, the school must take other steps to ensure that the student's preferences and interests are considered.

Informed parents can help insure their child is receiving all of the support to which they are entitled.



Services for *Amy*

Twenty-one-year-old Amy was identified with an intellectual disability when she was in first grade. She receives educational services in a school-based transition program for 18-21 year olds who have completed their academic programs and who are ready to concentrate on the work-related transition skills and experiences needed to achieve their post-school outcomes.

The school program includes life skills instruction, work readiness and work experience opportunities. Throughout the last several years, the school district provided Amy a formal vocational assessment and career exploration services. She worked at three in-school placements before she entered the transition program, which is not located at her high school.

Attending the program at a different location helps her experience this time as a step in her path to adulthood. Last year, Amy's teacher located a community work experience as a mail clerk. Amy received job coaching from the school paraprofessional and has expressed an interest in pursuing this type of work on a permanent basis. This will require coaching when she is placed in a new position because she has difficulty learning new tasks. Amy applied for and was found eligible for VR services. Amy and her parents attended the DVR intake meeting and discussed the employment plan with her VR Counselor.

Her VR counselor, a Community Rehabilitation Program, funded initially by DVR and long term by DDA, and the school district's Transition Program staff will share job placement responsibilities. Amy is eligible for long-term employment support through DDA. Her DDA case manager authorizes this support. Amy's Individualized Plan for Employment indicates that VR will provide job coaching when a job placement is found. Amy plans to use public transportation to get to work when she finds a job. Amy's parents will purchase a bus pass for her and the school district will help her to learn how to use the bus.

2. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended

More detail with Internet links may be found on pages 14-15.



3. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended

- Informed Choice
- Competitive, Integrated Employment
- Comparable Benefits, Individual Contribution and Cost Considerations
- Consumer Rights and Responsibilities
- Case Closure



Informed Choice

Throughout involvement with VR, a transitioning student is provided opportunities and assistance to exercise informed choice. Students are encouraged to consider a variety of choices during assessment, determining an employment goal, developing an employment plan, selecting services and service providers, and determining successful case closure. Students are encouraged to make and implement their own informed choices.

Competitive, Integrated Employment

DVR only assists individuals to obtain competitive employment in integrated settings. This means a job pays the same wages and benefits to employees with disabilities as paid to employees without disabilities doing similar work. And, the work setting includes the same amount of contact with non-disabled people as other employees without disabilities experience on the job.

Comparable Benefits, Individual Contribution and Cost Considerations

Comparable benefits available under another program (such as Student Financial Aid, medical benefits, etc.) must be used to pay for certain VR services, unless the benefits will interfere with or delay services such as an individual who is at extreme medical risk; an immediate job placement; or progressing toward the student's IPE employment goal. Some VR services consider the economic need of the individual with a disability and his or her family unit. Parents are considered part of a young adult's family unit until the young adult reaches age 24, if they are claiming the young adult as a dependent for income tax purposes. **Post-secondary schools consider this regardless of dependent status on federal taxes and until the student reaches age 24.**

Based on a determination of economic need, the available monthly resources of the family unit must be applied to a young adult's vocational rehabilitation program (for some services). The exception to this requirement occurs if a young adult is receiving SSI or SSDI. In this case, VR does not require the student or their parents to contribute to the cost of VR services. VR services are provided to an individual based on best value from the service provider that best meets the vocational rehabilitation needs of the individual.

Consumer rights and responsibilities

It is the responsibility of all VR consumers to be an active participant in developing and following their IPE. A consumer can appeal any decision at any time by talking with DVR, can request mediation, can contact the Washington Client Assistance Program (CAP) for assistance with the issue and for advocacy services, and/or can file a formal appeal through the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH).

Case closure

The purpose of Washington State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) is to empower people with disabilities to achieve a greater quality of life by obtaining and maintaining employment. Different than other programs like DDA, DVR services are not ongoing lifetime services.

A VR consumer's case will be closed upon successful job retention or closed for other reasons, if an employment outcome is not achieved. A VR consumer may request VR services again in the event they lose or are in danger of losing employment due to a disability-related reason and requires VR services to either maintain employment or obtain another job in the event of job loss. A new VR case may be opened for a former VR consumer who sustains a new/additional disability that impacts their ability to continue their current employment.

Ideally, a case will be closed as “successfully rehabilitated” (meaning employed for 90 days following stability) when the individual, the VR counselor, and others working with the individual agree that they have reached their employment goal and no longer requires VR services to maintain employment. A VR case file can also be closed because someone is ineligible for VR services, or for other reasons such as refusing services or failure to cooperate.



Related federal law — Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)

Unpaid community-based employment experiences

The U.S. Department of Labor has very specific guidelines for students and adults receiving vocational experiences in businesses without pay. Whenever an employment relationship exists, an employer will be held responsible to fully comply with all applicable sections of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). This means the employer is required to compensate the individual unless all of the following criteria for a non-employment relationship are met. These guidelines prevent students and vocational rehabilitation consumers from being used as “free labor” and/or displacing other workers. Unpaid community based work experiences can be very beneficial to a person’s vocational development and are allowed for vocational exploration, assessment and training. These requirements can help VR counselors and individuals with disabilities structure assessments and training programs with employers who do not wish to consider the participant to be an employee:

- The community based placement is documented and clearly defined on the individual’s IEP, vocational rehabilitation assessment, and/or IPE.
- The individual does not displace or reduce the hours of an existing employee.
- The individual will be under direct supervision by a school representative, a vocational rehabilitation service provider, or an employee of the business.



- The activities of the individual do not result in an immediate advantage to the business, or the advantage is clearly offset by the burden of training and supervision.
- The individual is working for training purposes and does not expect, or is not entitled to, a position after completion of the experience.
- The individual voluntarily participates in the training with the understanding that no wages or benefits will be available for this vocational experience.
- The length of the work experience is determined by the nature of the expected result. The individual engaged in a job shadow or career awareness experience would normally not be on the job site for more than a regular work shift. An individual engaged in a vocational assessment or work adjustment/job skill training may require a longer period depending on the objectives of the learning program.

For additional information, refer to the Washington Department of Labor and Industries website: www.lni.wa.gov and the Federal Department of Labor website: www.dol.gov.



There are specific guidelines for students and adults receiving vocational experiences in businesses without pay.

Where to find Vocational Rehabilitation resources in Washington state

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Call 1-800-637-5627 to learn the location and contact information of the office closest to you. You can also find this information at www.dshs.wa.gov/dvr along with our transition video and other helpful information.

American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Programs [Tribal VR]

There are currently eight Tribal VR programs in Washington State. You can find an updated list of these programs at either <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/jjra/division-vocational-rehabilitation/tribal-vr-programs-partners-washington-state-vocational-rehabilitation> or at www.canar.org or the advantage is clearly offset by the burden of training and supervision.

Colville Confederated Tribes

Phone: (509) 634-2723

Toll Free: (888) 881-7684 ext. 2723

Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation/Skokomish Tribal Nation

Chehalis Tribe

(360) 273-5911, Ext 1735 and Ext 1872

Skokomish Tribe

(360) 877-2200

Cowlitz Indian Tribe

Phone: (360) 575-6220

Lummi Tribe

(360) 312-2072

North Intertribal VR

(360) 671-7626

Samish Tribe

Phone: (360) 899-5282

South Puget Intertribal

Phone: (360) 462-3230

Toll Free: (800) 924-3984

Yakama Nation

(509) 865-5121 ext. 6017

Department of Services for the Blind

Call 1-800-552-7104 or email info@dsb.wa.gov to find the office closest to you. You can learn more about DSB at www.dsb.wa.gov.

What to do and when to do it? – For students with a developmental disability

If your child experiences a developmental disability, a suggested timeline of activities includes:

AGE		
15-16	<p>Apply for a Washington State I.D. card. Why: It will be needed to apply for adult services.</p>	 <p>• Get an I.D. card at your local Department of Licensing</p>
16	<p>Apply to become a client of the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA). Why: You may want these service options when your son/daughter turns 21. Long term job coaching support is based on availability of funding.</p>	 <p>• www.dshs.wa.gov/ddd/</p>
17-17½	<p>Consider if guardianship is necessary and determine the type of guardianship. Why: Age 18 is the age of majority (becoming a legal adult) and your son/daughter may need support making legal, medical and vocational decisions.</p>	<p>Guardianship</p>
17-19	<p>Apply for HUD Housing. Why: The wait list for housing can be very long, so it is important to apply early.</p>	
18	<p>If your child does not receive Social Security Benefits – apply now! Why: He or she is now an adult and parents' income is not counted. He/ she may be eligible for cash and medical benefits. There are many provisions available, called WORK INCENTIVES, that allow people with disabilities to keep benefits, including Medicare/Medicaid, while working. <i>He or she needs to pay rent to the family in order to maximize all benefits.</i></p>	
18	<p>Ask your DDA case manager about Medicaid Personal Care funding if your son or daughter is a client of DDA and the family provides personal care (help with bathing, grooming, dressing, laundry, etc.).</p>	<p>Medicaid Personal Care Funding</p>

AGE		
Young Men 18	<p>Register for Selective Services.</p> <p>Why: It's the law. Also, if planning to apply for financial aid to attend college, applying for Selective Service is required.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply on line at: http://www.sss.gov • Get a form from your local post office. • Return the form that comes in the mail.
Senior Year	<p>Fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).</p> <p>Why: If seeking aid to attend college, this form must be filled out by March 1 of Senior year for best consideration.</p>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.fafsa.ed.gov
19-21 or last year of school	<p>Apply for services with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR).</p> <p>Why: This agency helps people with disabilities become employed and understands how working will affect people's benefits.</p>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.dshs.wa.gov/dvr/
Anytime	<p>Apply for job search assistance with WorkSource Youth Services.</p> <p>Why: This is the local program that can help self-directed job seekers find part time and/or summer employment to help develop work skills.</p>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.go2worksource.com
Anytime	<p>Call for local transit system bus Travel Training and Paratransit services</p> <p>Why: This is free training for people who want to learn to be independent on the bus and flexible alternative public transportation for people with disabilities and the elderly.</p>	<p>Travel Training & Paratransit Services</p>
Anytime	<p>Apply for services at a local Center for Independent Living (CIL). The State Independent Living Council [SILC] can help you find local resources.</p> <p>Why: These organizations provide support for independent living skills development, advocacy, and benefits planning.</p>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.wasilc.org

What to do and when to do it ? – For students eligible for an IEP and/or a Section 504 Plan

If your child is entitled to an IEP, a Section 504 Plan and/or has a disability, a suggested timeline of activities includes:

AGE		
15-16	<p>Apply for a Washington State I.D. card. Why: It will be needed to apply for adult services.</p>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get an I.D. card at your local Department of Licensing
Sophomore Year	<p>Apply to join the University of Washington DO-IT Scholars Program before January deadline. Why: This program prepares young people with disabilities for college, careers, independent living and leadership roles in society. DO-IT Scholars explore careers and the world of work, learn to select and use adaptive technology, applications software, and Internet resources.</p>	 <p>1-888-972-DOIT</p>
16	<p>Apply to become a client of the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA). Why: You may want these service options when your son/daughter turns 21. Long term job coaching support is based on availability of funding.</p>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.dshs.wa.gov/ddd/
17-19	<p>Apply for HUD Housing. Why: The wait list for housing can be very long, so it is important to apply early.</p>	
18	<p>If your child does not receive Social Security Benefits – apply now! Why: He or she is now an adult and parents' income is not counted. He/ she may be eligible for cash and medical benefits. There are many provisions available, called WORK INCENTIVES, that allow people with disabilities to keep benefits, including Medicare/Medicaid, while working. <i>He or she needs to pay rent to the family in order to maximize all benefits.</i></p>	
18	<p>Register for Selective Services. Why: It's the law. Also, if planning to apply for financial aid to attend college, applying for Selective Service is required.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply on line at: http://www.sss.gov • Get a form from your local post office. • Return the form that comes in the mail.

504 Section 504 5

See pages 16-17 of this booklet for more information of “504 Eligible Students.”

AGE		
18 or last year of school	<p>Apply for services with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR).</p> <p>Why: This agency helps people with disabilities become employed and understands how working will affect people’s benefits.</p>	 <p>Washington State Department of Social & Health Services</p> <p>• www.dshs.wa.gov/dvr/</p>
Senior Year	<p>Fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).</p> <p>Why: If seeking aid to attend college, this form must be filled out by March 1 of Senior year for best consideration.</p>	 <p>FSA FEDERAL STUDENT AID</p> <p>• www.fafsa.ed.gov</p>
Anytime	<p>Apply for job search assistance with WorkSource Youth Services.</p> <p>Why: This is the local program that can help self-directed job seekers find part time and/or summer employment to help develop work skills.</p>	 <p>WORKSource Washington</p> <p>• www.go2worksource.com</p>
Anytime	<p>Call for local transit system bus Travel Training and Paratransit services</p> <p>Why: This is free training for people who want to learn to be independent on the bus and flexible alternative public transportation for people with disabilities and the elderly.</p>	<p>Travel Training & Paratransit Services</p>
Anytime	<p>Apply for services at a local Center for Independent Living (CIL). The State Independent Living Council [SILC] can help you find local resources.</p> <p>Why: These organizations provide support for independent living skills development, advocacy, and benefits planning.</p>	 <p>SILC</p> <p>• www.wasilc.org</p>

Acronyms and Definitions

AIVRS or **TVR** - American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services or Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation programs are vocational rehabilitation services offered by tribes receiving federal grants to serve federally enrolled American Indians.

CAP – Client Assistance Program

Comparable Services and Benefits – are a) provided or paid for, in whole or in part, by other federal, state or local public agencies, by health insurance or by employee benefits; b) available to the VR customer at the time needed to insure progress toward achieving the employment outcome in the customer’s IPE; and c) similar to the services the customer would receive from DVR.

CRP – Community Rehabilitation Providers are agencies and organizations that provide employment supports such as job coaching, job placement, work exploration, etc. They may be funded by schools, DVR, DDA and/or county DD offices or MH services.

DDA – Developmental Disabilities Administration

DDLOT – Developmental Disabilities Life Opportunities Trust, www.ddlot.org, allows individual with developmental disabilities or their families to set aside funds for future use without affecting their eligibility for government services and benefits.

DSB – Department of Services for the Blind

DVR – Division of Vocational Rehabilitation



ESY – Extended School Year is a school based program that may provide a disabled youth with services during summer months. ESY programming should be offered to a student who has a decline in academic, social and/or related knowledge and skills outlined in their IEP due to an interruption in education, and who needs time and services to regain their prior level of functioning. Sometimes a youth in a critical stage of developing a skill that has the potential for increasing their self-sufficiency. If such a skill is not completely acquired and mastered, it is likely the current level of acquisition will be lost due to the interruption of summer vacation. ESY programs are developed differently by each school district and so vary significantly in scope and style.

FAPE – Free Appropriate Public Education is an educational right of children with disabilities in the United States that is guaranteed by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

IDEA – the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is a federal law ensuring services to children with disabilities. Children and youth (ages 3-21) receive special education and related services under IDEA Part B.

IEP – An Individual Education Program is a written statement school districts develop at least annually with each parent and youth receiving special education. It addresses the annual academic and functional achievement goals and related services for a student in special education.

IPE – An Individualized Plan for Employment, defined in WAC 388-891-1115, is a form that documents important decisions a vocational rehabilitation customer and counselor make about vocational rehabilitation services.

OSPI – The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction is Washington's State Education Agency

Related Services – means transportation and other developmental, corrective, or other supportive services required to assist a student to benefit from the provision of specially designed instruction.

Retraining – is the process of learning a new skill or trade, often in response to a change in the economic environment.

SSI – Supplemental Security Income is a federal income supplement program funded by general tax revenues [not Social Security taxes) designed to help aged, blind and disabled people who have little or no income; and provides cash to meet basic needs for food, clothing and shelter.

SSDI – Social Security Disability Insurance is a federally run benefits program financed by the Social Security tax that provides aid to people who have a history of working and are currently unable to work due to a permanent disabling condition.

Supported Employment – See WAC 388-891-0800,
<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=388-891-0800>

Transition Services – (Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended Section 2 (37) definition) The term “transition services” means a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome-oriented process, that promotes movement from school to post school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation. The coordinated set of activities shall be based upon the individual student’s needs, taking into account the student’s preferences and interests, and shall include instruction, community experiences, the development of employment and other post school adult living objectives, and, when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

VR – Vocational Rehabilitation



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Permission to copy this handbook is granted.

Download at <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/JJRA/dvr/school-transition>



**Helping high school
students with
disabilities prepare
for employment.**

