

Indiana Vocational  
Rehabilitation  
Postsecondary Training  
Services Handbook

## **POSTSECONDARY TRAINING SERVICES**

Indiana Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) has prepared this guidance document to help explain what is available to you as a VR participant seeking postsecondary education assistance and your responsibilities as a VR participant.

### **Choose Your Postsecondary Institution**

You may choose any postsecondary institution you want, as long as the institution is fully accredited by the appropriate regional accreditation authority recognized by the Office of Postsecondary Education of the U.S. Department of Education and offers the degree you need to achieve your employment outcome.

Postsecondary training services for graduate school may be provided if a graduate degree is required to achieve the employment outcome listed on your Individualized Plan for Employment.

VR financial assistance for postsecondary training is based upon the *lessor* of either the published cost of the postsecondary institution, or the rate set by the VR program for postsecondary training. The VR rate for postsecondary training is based on what it would cost to go to a publicly supported institution in Indiana. VR provides all services by the “least-cost” principle, which means VR will provide you with the funding necessary to obtain your degree at the lowest cost option, which typically means an in-state public institution. VR assistance with postsecondary training services may not cover all of your education expenses. You are responsible for any additional costs that exceed the amount of postsecondary training services you receive from VR.

Questions to consider when choosing a postsecondary institution:

- Does the institution have the program appropriate for your employment outcome?
- Will your training and school be marketable to employers in the area where you plan to seek employment?
- What are the demands of the program?
- How much of your education will you be financially responsible for?

## **Plan for Your Education**

Before you can receive VR postsecondary training services, you must:

- Provide your VR counselor proof of acceptance at the postsecondary institution you plan to attend.
- Make efforts to obtain grants and other financial assistance.
- Fill out your Federal Application for Federal Student Aid (“FAFSA”) by the priority deadline of the school you are attending.
- Provide proof of the award or denial of financial assistance; the amount of such an award; and the acceptance of such award at the postsecondary institution you plan to attend to your VR counselor.

Your VR counselor is available to provide guidance and direction on applying for scholarships and completing your FAFSA. The FAFSA is released annually on October 1<sup>st</sup> for the upcoming academic year. In order to be considered for Indiana State Aid, you must file the FAFSA no later than April 15<sup>th</sup> for the upcoming academic year. It is important for you to submit your FAFSA early, but by no later than the earlier of either the priority deadline of the school you are attending or April 15<sup>th</sup> so that you can secure the most funding possible. For more information on completing and submitting the FAFSA, see the Resources section on page 9.

## **Apply for Financial Aid**

- Complete the FAFSA by the required deadline. You can complete your FAFSA online at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov) or you can request a paper copy from the US Department of Education office of Federal Student Aid.
- Once you complete your FAFSA, you will receive a copy of your Student Aid Report. Contact the financial aid office at the institution you will be attending to confirm that the institution has received your Student Aid Report and that it has all information needed to determine your eligibility for financial aid.
- You must submit a copy of the first page of your Student Aid Report to your VR counselor each year you request postsecondary training services from VR.,
- If you are eligible for financial aid, you must provide a copy of all financial aid award letters you receive to your VR counselor.

## **Funding for Postsecondary Training Assistance**

You should ideally speak to your counselor at least 30 days before the start of the academic term to make sure you meet all the requirements to be eligible for postsecondary training assistance from VR. To determine how much postsecondary training assistance you may receive, VR completes part A of the Financial Aid Communication (FAC) form and sends the Financial Aid Communication form to the Financial Aid Administrator of the chosen postsecondary institution. The institution then will complete part B of the Financial Aid Communication form. The postsecondary training institution may send the completed form to VR directly; however some Financial Aid Offices will not forward your completed Financial Aid Communication form to your VR counselor directly. ***You must contact the institution’s Financial Aid Office to request that they forward the completed form to your VR counselor or provide you the completed form so that you can return it to your counselor.*** VR must have the Financial Aid Communication form with both Part A and B completed at least *one* (1) month prior to the start of the academic term. If your VR counselor does not receive the form at least *one* month before the start of the academic term you may be denied Postsecondary Training Assistance from VR.

The Financial Aid Communication Form is a document you, your VR counselor, and the Financial Aid Officer fill out every academic term and summer session (if you attend school during the summer). The Financial Aid Communication form helps VR determine the amount of VR assistance that may be provided. When your Financial Aid Communication form has been completed and received by VR, your VR counselor will determine what if any assistance VR can provide you for tuition, fees, increased cost in excess of your normal living expenses, or other services necessary for the attainment of your employment outcome identified in your Individual Plan for Employment (IPE).

### *Consideration of Grant and Scholarship Awards*

When determining a participant’s resource amount, VR only considers grant and scholarship awards that will be used to reduce the participant’s postsecondary education expenses. VR can only provide assistance on your actual expenses that are eligible for VR assistance and must determine whether your grant and scholarship awards reduce your actual postsecondary education

expenses. If you receive a scholarship that is unrestricted and you choose to use it for an expense that VR does not cover, it will not be considered a resource.

Your institution's financial aid office will indicate on the FAC all grants and scholarships you receive for the academic term. If you accept grant or scholarship awards from your institution, those awards become resources that reduce your postsecondary expenses. Depending on how those awards are used, they potentially reduce the amount of assistance VR can provide. Your VR counselor will work with you and your institution to determine how those grants and scholarship awards will be used.

VR will count as a resource any grant or scholarship award amount that you use to pay for tuition, fees, books and materials, room and board (if you meet the criteria for room and board assistance from VR, see *Housing Expenses* section below), or certain other expenses. VR will not count as a resource any grant or scholarship award amount that you use to pay for postsecondary expenses that are not eligible for VR assistance.

#### *Postsecondary Training Assistance Calculation*

Your amount of assistance is the total of VR's maximum rates for tuition, room and board (as determined necessary), transportation and books, tools and materials, minus the amount of any scholarships, grants, other financial aid you receive and your Expected Family Contribution. VR excludes student loans and federal work study from its calculation of the amount you have available to contribute to your postsecondary education expenses. If you receive SSI or SSDI, VR will exclude your Expected Family Contribution documented on the Financial Aid Communication form from VR's postsecondary assistance calculation. VR provides all services by the "least-cost" principle, which means VR will provide you with the funding necessary to obtain your degree at the lowest cost option which typically means an in-state public institution. If you choose to attend a program which is more expensive than the amount of funding VR provides, you will be responsible for the additional expenses.

The amount of VR assistance may not cover all your postsecondary expenses. If you cannot pay for all your expenses, you may ask your postsecondary institution's financial aid office to

consider revising your financial aid package. The financial aid staff at the postsecondary institution can assist you in the process, taking into consideration any disability-related issues or other circumstances that may not have been considered when you completed your FAFSA. It is your responsibility to provide the financial aid office with the documentation they need.

Alternatively, if you have unmet need, you can choose to take out student loans. VR does not consider loan dollars as a resource when determining the amount of postsecondary assistance.

Some questions to consider when deciding to take out student loans:

- How much will you need to borrow? Are other resources available to meet your need?
- What is the interest rate on the loan?
- What fees will you be responsible for?
- How will the loan be disbursed?
- What is the monthly payment? Is there a minimum payment?
- What deferment options are available?
- How will repaying these loans affect me you financially after graduation?
- What are the consequences if you fail to repay the student loan?

### *Defaulted Student Loan(s)*

You will not be eligible for federal student aid, including grants, additional student loans, or work study assistance, if you have defaulted on a previous student loan. If you have defaulted on a student loan, you will need to resolve the defaulted student loan and provide documentation from the lender that the defaulted student loan has been deferred or forgiven. If you are determined ineligible for federal student aid due to an unresolved defaulted student loan, you are not eligible for postsecondary assistance from VR.

### *Expenses*

VR may also assist you with additional expenses based on your individual needs. VR will may provide funding for books, tools, training supplies and equipment, and other training materials when they are required for the course or training program. You may be requested to provide written documentation (e.g., course syllabus, letter of need from the institution's Special Services office etc.) of required equipment and materials or when you require certain equipment and

materials to overcome limitations imposed by your disability. Any training tools and equipment that VR pays for will remain VR property until released to you upon a successful case closure as noted in the case record.

As a student with a disability, you may also be faced with additional expenses. Examples of these expenses include:

- Special equipment related to the your disability and maintenance of the equipment;
- Services for personal use or study such as readers, interpreters, note takers, or personal care attendants;
- Transportation necessary to pursue an academic program, if transportation is not accessible; and
- Medical expenses related directly to your disability that are not covered by insurance or other comparable benefits.

You should inform the institution’s financial aid office of any disability-related expenses.

### *Housing Expenses*

You may receive assistance with room and board if you have a disability- related need to live on campus. Housing assistance is based on the rate set by VR.

If you choose to attend a private or out-of-state postsecondary institution you are responsible for additional costs such as room and board, which exceed the least-cost of a public or in-state institution. If it is determined that there is no local postsecondary institution or program that has the necessary training to achieve the employment outcome identified on your IPE, the VR program may include the cost of room and board up to Indiana’s established rate in VR’s postsecondary assistance calculation.

If you choose to commute to and from the closest state-supported school or local training program you may be reimbursed mileage expenses for no more than one (1) round trip between your place of residence and the institution per day of scheduled classes.

### **Stay in Contact with VR**

One of the most important responsibilities you have is to establish and maintain contact with

your VR counselor. Your VR counselor is here to help you complete your training successfully so that you can achieve your employment outcome. You must give your VR counselor a copy of your class schedule for the upcoming term and unofficial transcript reflecting grades for the most recently completed term as soon as possible, but at least *one* month prior to the first day of class for the upcoming term. If you do not provide a copy of your class schedule and unofficial transcript as indicated, you may be denied postsecondary training assistance. You should meet periodically with your VR Counselor to evaluate the progress toward achieving your employment outcome. If a situation comes up that could affect your ability to complete your courses, you must contact your VR counselor. You may be asked to provide other types of documentation should you require childcare, transportation, or other supporting services to enable you to attend class.

### **Understanding the Full-Time Requirement**

You are required to attend your postsecondary institution full-time to receive VR assistance with your postsecondary education. However, VR may provide assistance for you to attend school part-time if you meet any of the following circumstances:

- Your disability or health prevents you from attending school full-time.
- You have responsibilities as a caregiver for a family member that prevents you from attending school full-time.
- You need to be employed to provide for your basic living needs and need to attend school part-time to stay employed.
- There are scheduling conflicts for the required course offerings at your postsecondary institution which prevent you from complying with the full-time requirement.

You should speak with your VR counselor if you believe you meet any of the above circumstances and would like to request a waiver of the full-time requirement. VR will consider your request and notify you of its determination in a timely manner.

### **Maintain Academic Performance Requirements**

To remain eligible for postsecondary training services, you must maintain a cumulative grade point average (“GPA”) of “C” (2.0 on a 4.0 point system) or higher, maintain a sufficient



cumulative GPA to meet the graduation requirements in your major field of study and maintain satisfactory academic progress as defined by the institution attended to maintain your financial aid eligibility. Failure to meet all of these requirements will result in termination of postsecondary education services.

### *Dropping or Changing a Course*

You must obtain authorization from your VR counselor before you add, drop or withdraw from a course. If you add, drop or withdraw from a course without prior authorization from VR, you cannot receive assistance to retake that course. If you need to withdraw for medical reasons, you must submit written documentation from your physician or the institution's health service to your VR counselor at the time of withdrawal. You must notify your VR counselor of all hospitalizations or medical treatments affecting your school attendance.

### *Repeating a Course*

You may receive postsecondary training assistance for repeated courses if you notified your VR counselor that you would be unable to successfully complete the course, that the inability to complete the course was due to circumstances beyond your control, and you have received a written notice from your VR counselor that funding for repeating the course in question meets with VR approval.

### *Elective Courses*

You may receive assistance with elective courses that are necessary to complete your degree. VR will pay for the least costly elective course required. For example, if you need a fine arts credit, VR will pay for Art Appreciation instead of Photography if the Photography course is a more costly course than the Art Appreciation course. The Photography course may be a more costly elective course option due to additional costs for required photography supplies to enroll in the Photography course.

### *Tutoring or Remedial Work*

If you are at risk of failing a course, you must notify your VR counselor. You should also speak to your instructor, academic advisor, or the office that provides services for students with

disabilities. If your instructor or academic advisor recommends tutoring, you must inform your VR counselor immediately. If you need to take remedial courses, the VR program may assist with paying for those courses provided that the courses are required or recommended by the postsecondary institution or program or your VR counselor has determined that you require remedial coursework.

### **RESOURCES**

#### **Federal Student Aid Information Hotline**

800.433.3243 or 800.4.FED.AID; TTY Users may call 800.730.8913

For checking application status, ordering duplicate Student Aid Report (SAR), adding or changing colleges listed on the SAR, providing a change in address, help in filing applications and general information on aid eligibility.

Customer service representatives staff these numbers from 8:00 am – 11:00 pm (Eastern Time) Monday – Friday and 8:00 am – 5:00 pm on Saturdays.

#### **Federal Student Aid Information on the Web**

[www.studentaid.ed.gov](http://www.studentaid.ed.gov)

You may submit your FAFSA online by going to this site, you can also get information to help you decide on a career and locate schools offering majors in that field. You may also look for scholarships using a free search service.

#### **Indiana Commission for Higher Education**

[www.in.gov/che](http://www.in.gov/che)

Indiana’s clearing house for information on postsecondary educational institutions, and various state scholarships available to students. You can also use the websites “College Cost Estimator” and “College Profiles” to aid in your decision of which institute to attend.

#### **Learn More Indiana**

[www.learnmoreindiana.org](http://www.learnmoreindiana.org)

A partnership between various educational groups in Indiana, Learn More Indiana provides various resources for all students as they work to achieve postsecondary education.

**Indiana Department of Workplace Workforce Development – Career Training and Adult Education**

<https://www.in.gov/dwd/2678.htm>

Indiana Department of Workforce Development’s clearing house for information on technical education and careers including educational programs and funding for training programs.

Should you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact your VR counselor.

I have received a copy of the Indiana Vocational Rehabilitation Postsecondary Training Services Handbook, reviewed it, discussed it with my VR counselor, and understand my responsibilities as outlined in this handbook.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date