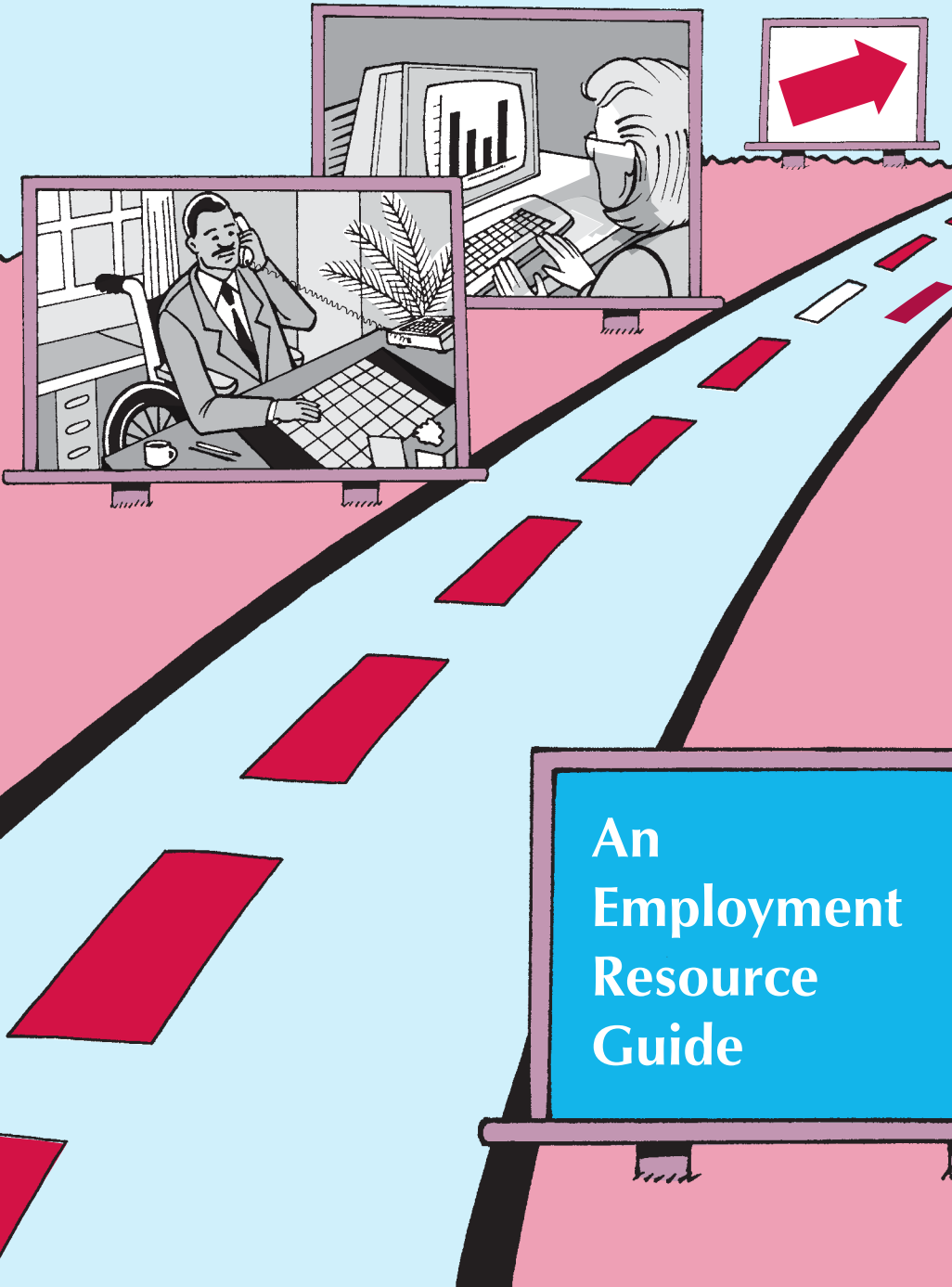


The Road to Work



An
Employment
Resource
Guide

Vocational Rehabilitation Services Pledge of Customer Service

You Can Trust That:

- ✓ The VRS staff will have the skills they need to help you.
- ✓ Your rehabilitation plan will be implemented in a timely manner.
- ✓ Authorizations will be issued on time.
- ✓ Your calls will be returned promptly.
- ✓ Your counselor will have your best interest at heart.
- ✓ Your counselor will listen to you.
- ✓ Your input will make a difference.
- ✓ Your counselor will treat you as an equal.
- ✓ Your choices will be respected.
- ✓ Services will be delivered considering your timetable.
- ✓ You will decide what your future will be.
- ✓ You will have informed choice in selecting your vocational goal.
- ✓ You will have informed choice in the selection of service providers.
- ✓ Because you make these decisions, you also accept the responsibility for them.
- ✓ Through a job, you will increase your ability to become self-sufficient.
- ✓ You will reduce your dependency on public benefits through self-sufficiency.
- ✓ You will receive information in appropriate alternative formats.
- ✓ You can advocate for yourself or designate someone else to advocate for you.
- ✓ The VRS staff will advocate for you on your behalf.

***Because we hold these values, for ourselves and for you,
we will pledge our best for you!***

Purpose

Vocational Rehabilitation Services is a State-Federal partnership program first established in 1920. The purpose of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) is to assist eligible individuals with disabilities to achieve employment and independence. A major focus of the VRS program is to ensure that individual customers be the driving force behind their rehabilitation programs. We believe all eligible individuals have the right to make meaningful and informed choices leading to suitable employment. These choices include the employment outcome, specific services needed to achieve the outcome, the service provider(s), and the methods for obtaining services.

If you are eligible for VRS, you will have opportunity to work in partnership with a professional Vocational Rehabilitation Services Counselor until you are firmly in a job that is right for you. Your Counselor will provide you with information and referral services as well as counseling and guidance to help you with career planning. Any assistive technology that is required for employment, after reasonable accommodations have been made by the employer, will also be provided. Your Counselor will assist you in obtaining and coordinating the delivery of services to ensure that they are provided in the most efficient and cost effective manner.

To help us accomplish these objectives, the Vocational Rehabilitation Services program has been included as a partner in the Workforce Investment Act, passed by the U.S. Congress in 1998. A number of agencies which had been helping individuals become employed through their own separate program mandates will now join forces in a collaborative manner. Our goal is to simplify access to services for you, our customer. By sharing information and resources with other partners, we can better define the services tailored to meet your needs. The last several pages are devoted to the programs offered by our partners. The Vocational Rehabilitation Services office will help you access these programs. We welcome the opportunity to work with you.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program

“The Road To Work: An Employment Resource Guide” was developed to provide information to those individuals with employment and training needs.

This guide contains information on services offered by Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Partners of the local **One Stop System**. Your local **One Stop System** provides access to rehabilitation, training and employment opportunities to all customers.

This guide was made possible by **Vocational Rehabilitation Services** and the **One Stop System Partners** who have made every effort to ensure the accuracy of this information.

Non Discrimination

The VRS program provides vocational rehabilitation services to all individuals who are eligible without regard to race, color, national origin, creed, age, gender, or type of disability. There is no residency requirement that would exclude any individual from applying for services.

Your Application And Eligibility To Participate In The VR Program

To learn more about the VRS program, you will meet with a VRS Counselor. At that meeting, you will be asked if you would like to complete an application. You and your Counselor will also discuss what information is required in order to determine whether or not you will be eligible for services.

Eligibility is based on federal requirements. You will be eligible if:

- you have a physical or mental impairment which is a substantial impediment to employment (meaning that, based on attendant medical, psychological, vocational, educational, and other related factors, it hinders you from preparing for, entering, engaging in, or retaining employment consistent with your abilities and capabilities); and

- you require vocational rehabilitation services in order to prepare for, enter, engage in, or retain employment.

If you are blind or have another disability for which you are receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments, you will be presumed to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services if you intend to achieve an employment outcome and there is no clear and convincing evidence that you are incapable of obtaining an employment outcome due to the severity of your disability.

In all instances, you have the right to an assessment of your eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs. Existing reports from employers, doctors, hospitals, schools, etc., will be used to the maximum extent possible to help determine your eligibility. If existing reports are not available or do not reflect your current condition, your VRS Counselor may ask you to undergo a combination of medical, psychological, and/or vocational evaluations. Your Counselor will determine your eligibility within a reasonable time, no more than 60 days from the date of your application. All evaluations necessary to determine your eligibility will be provided at no cost to you.

You can help your Counselor by keeping all scheduled evaluation appointments, and any future appointments throughout your participation in the VRS program. With your cooperation, your Counselor will be able to assist you in making informed choices. Your obligation is to follow through with all of the steps necessary for you to reach your employment goal. Please notify your Counselor with all information that is pertinent to your participation with the VRS program, such as changes in SSDI and/or SSI benefits, address changes, changes to your courses during training, etc.

Confidentiality

It is necessary to collect information about you in order to determine your eligibility, provide you with appropriate services, and follow your progress toward meeting your vocational goal. All information about you is confidential, including the fact that you have applied for Vocational Rehabilitation Services.

You will be asked to give your consent for your VRS Counselor to obtain information about you and share information with others taking part in your rehabilitation program. You have the right to refuse your consent for the VRS program to obtain or share any information. However, if your refusal makes it impossible to determine your eligibility or to continue toward an employment outcome, services cannot be continued.

Information about you will be kept in your file. With some exceptions, you have the right to inspect and copy information in your case file. You also have the right to add your own comments to your case file. All requests to review, copy, or add comments to your case file must be presented in writing to your Counselor.

Medical, psychological, or other information your Counselor believes may be harmful to you may be withheld from you directly, but must be provided through a physician, psychologist, or other representative. Information may also be withheld if the source of the information has indicated that the information is not to be released.

Generally, information about you will be released only to those participating in your rehabilitation program. However, when requested, information about you may be released, as required by law, to:

- the Federal government, for reporting and statistical purposes;
- a court of law, if the information is subpoenaed or demanded by a court order; or
- law enforcement officials, if you are involved in a crime or the investigation of a crime.

Ineligibility And Case Closure

If you are ineligible to participate in the VRS program, your Counselor may be able to refer you to other agencies, programs, or service providers listed at the end of this brochure. You will be notified in writing if you are ineligible and why. Your case will be closed:

- at your request;
- when you reach your vocational goal;
- if you become ineligible for further services;
- if you move out of the state and your Counselor is unable to contact you; or
- if you fail to cooperate.

You have the right to reapply to the VRS program at a future date if you believe your situation has changed. You may also appeal the decision of case closure.

For cases determined ineligible, your case will be reviewed within twelve months, unless you request to the contrary, to determine if you would like to reapply for Vocational Rehabilitation services.

Individualized Plan For Employment

After you have been determined eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation Services, your Counselor will help you understand your options for developing an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). Your Counselor will be available to assist you in developing your IPE, in whole or in part. Technical assistance will also be available from individuals other than your Counselor.

The IPE is designed to achieve your planned employment outcome, which is consistent with your unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, and interests. Your IPE will contain the services that you will receive, who will provide them, and relevant time frames. Responsibilities of yourself, your Counselor, and other agencies helping you to reach your vocational goal will also be identified.

You and your Counselor will sign the IPE after development, indicating agreement. You will be provided a copy of the IPE, and any subsequent amendments, in an understandable way for your records.

Your IPE will be reviewed at least once annually by you and your Counselor to discuss your progress and to determine if changes are necessary. Your IPE may be amended as needed.

You may request to review your IPE with your Counselor whenever you believe changes may be necessary. Any amendments to your IPE will be in writing. All changes in your rehabilitation program will need to be discussed with your Counselor prior to any action being made in service provision.

Services

Services can include, but are not limited to:

- an assessment to determine your eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs by qualified personnel, including, if appropriate, an assessment by personnel skilled in rehabilitation technology;
- counseling and guidance, including information and support services to assist you in exercising informed choice;
- referral and other services to secure needed services from other agencies;
- job related services, including job search and placement assistance, job retention services, follow-up services, and follow-along services;
- vocational and other training services, including personal and vocational adjustment services, books, tools, or other training materials, and services to your family if necessary for your rehabilitation;
- treatment of physical and mental impairments, including corrective surgery or therapeutic treatment necessary to correct or substantially modify a physical or mental condition that is considered a substantial impediment to employment, necessary hospitalization in connection with surgery or treatment, prosthetic and orthotic devices, eyeglasses and visual services, hearing aids and similar

devices, special services necessary for the treatment of end-stage renal disease, and treatment for emotional disorders;

- maintenance for additional costs which result from program participation;
- transportation, including adequate training in the use of public transportation provided in connection with any other service needed to achieve an employment outcome;
- on-the-job or other related personal assistance services provided while receiving other services;
- interpreter services for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, and reader services for individuals who are blind;
- rehabilitation teaching services, and orientation and mobility services for individuals who are blind;
- occupational licenses, tools, equipment and initial stocks and supplies;
- technical assistance and other consultation services to conduct market analyses, develop business plans, and provide resources to assist individuals who are pursuing self-employment or telecommuting or establishing a small business operation as an employment outcome;
- rehabilitation technology, including telecommunications, sensory, and other technological aids and devices;
- transition services for students with disabilities to help make the transition from school to work;
- supported employment services;
- specific post-employment services necessary to assist an individual with a disability to retain, regain, or advance in employment;
- small business program.

You and your Counselor will agree on the individualized services necessary to achieve your employment outcome.

The availability of program funds, school or training program openings, and other factors may delay or affect your services. Your Counselor will inform you when delays or changes occur which will affect your services.

Who Will Pay For Vocational Rehabilitation Services

VRS program funds can be spent only for the services, equipment, and other assistance absolutely necessary for you to be successfully employed.

Services obtainable from other agencies and programs will be used before VRS funds are used to pay for services. Your Counselor will ask you to apply to other programs that may pay the cost of a service. If you fail to apply to other programs when asked, VRS funds will not be used.

The VRS program will pay for services agreed to by you and your Counselor. VRS cannot pay for any services you received prior to your participation in the VRS program.

Your Right To Appeal

You have the right to appeal any decision made or action taken by your VRS Counselor with which you disagree. You also have the right to be told how to pursue mediation or to initiate an administrative hearing process by your VRS Counselor.

Any questions or concerns about your rehabilitation program should be discussed with your Counselor before you consider an appeal. You may request mediation or an administrative hearing if you are not satisfied with the discussion with your Counselor. All appeal requests can be made verbally or in writing and must be made within fifteen (15) days from the date of the decision or action which is to be reviewed.

After you have requested an appeal, the Area Supervisor will ask you to complete a Request for Administrative Hearing form, in which you state the issues you are appealing, and indicate whether or not you wish to pursue mediation. The Request for Administrative Hearing form also contains information about selecting the impartial hearing officer who will preside over the administrative hearing. If the impartial hearing officer is not agreed upon by you and your Counselor, the impartial hearing officer will be selected on a random basis.

If you have indicated that you wish to pursue mediation, the impartial hearing officer will schedule the administrative hear-

ing to be held between thirty-five (35) and forty-five (45) days after the date your request for mediation was received by VRS. The administrative hearing will be held unless the hearing officer receives a signed mediation agreement from your mediator.

If you have requested mediation, a mediator will be assigned to you. The mediator will notify you of the date, time and location of the mediation session. You have the right to be represented at the mediation session by a person you have chosen. During the mediation process you or your representative may submit evidence and information to support your position.

All discussions that occur during your mediation session will be confidential and may not be used as evidence in any subsequent due process hearings or civil proceedings. Both parties in the mediation session will be asked to sign a confidentiality statement before beginning any mediation.

If agreement is reached during mediation, the mediator will prepare a written mediation agreement that is signed by you and VRS. A copy of the agreement will be provided to all involved parties. Upon receipt of the agreement, the hearing officer will cancel your previously scheduled administrative hearing. If agreement is not reached through mediation, the mediator will notify the hearing officer, who will then proceed with your scheduled administrative hearing.

Administrative hearings will be conducted as follows:

You will receive written notification from the impartial hearing officer regarding the time, date, and location of the administrative hearing. You may choose to be represented by legal counsel or any other person. (The VRS program will not pay for legal counsel for you during the appeal process. Free legal counsel may be available to you through community legal services organizations.) You and your representative may submit evidence or information to support your position, and may examine evidence, information, and witnesses presented by VRS and its representatives.

The hearing officer will make a decision based upon the State Plan, Rehabilitation Act and Amendments, federal and state regulations, and state agency policy. The hearing officer will issue Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law within thirty (30) days after the administrative hearing. The Findings of

Fact and Conclusions of Law will be sent to both parties, and a copy will be sent to the Deputy Director of VRS.

If either party is dissatisfied with the decision, either party may ask the Secretary of the Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA) to review the hearing officer's decision. All requests for further review must be received by the Secretary within twenty (20) days of the hearing officer's decision.

During the Secretary's review of the administrative hearing decision, both parties will have the opportunity to submit additional evidence and information relevant to a final decision. The Secretary cannot overturn or modify the decision of the hearing officer or part of the decision that supports your position unless the Secretary concludes, based on clear and convincing evidence, that the decision of the hearing officer is clearly erroneous on the basis of being contrary to the State Plan, Rehabilitation Act and Amendments, federal and state regulations or state agency policy.

The Secretary of FSSA will make a final decision in writing within thirty days after the deadline for the parties to submit additional evidence. A full report of the findings will be sent to both parties, and a copy will be sent to the Deputy Director of VRS.

If either party is dissatisfied with the Secretary's decision, a civil action may be filed in an appropriate State or Federal Court. The civil action must be filed in the appropriate court within thirty (30) calendar days after you receive the Secretary's decision. If you do not file the petition within the allotted time, as specified, all rights for judicial review by the courts will terminate.

If a party files a civil action challenging the decision of the Secretary of FSSA, the decision of the Secretary shall be implemented pending review by the court. However, throughout the review process, prior to review by the Secretary of FSSA, services being provided to you, including evaluation and assessment services, plan development, may not be suspended, reduced, or terminated unless such services have been obtained through misrepresentation, fraud, collusion, or criminal conduct on your part, or unless you or your representative so request.

Indiana Protection And Advocacy Services Client Assistance Program

The Client Assistance Program (CAP) is administered by Indiana Protection and Advocacy Services, an agency of State government. CAP is available to you if you are seeking or receiving vocational rehabilitation services and you have questions or concerns about the VRS program. CAP operates independently of VRS. CAP can:

- describe what services are available through the VRS program;
- explain how to get Vocational Rehabilitation Services and how the VRS process works;
- inform you of your rights and responsibilities within the VRS program;
- listen to any concerns or questions you have about your participation in the VRS program;
- investigate your questions or concerns and work with you and your VRS Counselor to come to an agreement; and
- assist you in appealing VRS decisions if agreement cannot be reached in other ways.

You can contact CAP by:

- calling (317) 722-5555 or, toll-free, 1-800-622-4845 (Both numbers are TTY/TDD equipped);
- writing to CAP at Indiana Protection and Advocacy Services, 4701 N. Keystone Avenue, Suite 222, Indianapolis, Indiana 46205; or
- asking your VRS Counselor to help you contact CAP.

CAP services are free and are available to you no matter where you live in Indiana.

Workforce Investment Act VRS's Partner Programs

These partner programs are provided through a variety of state and private agencies. Your Vocational Rehabilitation Services Counselor can help you with information on the particular agencies in your community and can also help you with contacting the right people.

Title I Adult

Provides for workforce development activities that equip employed, unemployed, or underemployed, low to moderate income adults (age 18 and above) with the information and training to qualify for high skill, high wage occupations that are in demand in the local area.

Title I Dislocated Worker

Provides “Rapid Response” activities to workers who have lost their jobs because of permanent closing, mass layoff, or disaster. The goal is to assist dislocated workers in getting new employment as soon as possible.

Title I Youth

Provides for workforce development activities that prepare low income youth (ages 14-21) for entry into career paths leading to high skill, high wage occupations. The service may include occupational skills and educational certification training.

Title I Job Corp

Provides career development opportunities to economically disadvantaged young adults ages 16 through 24. Job Corp centers are residential programs and may include GED or high school diploma services, occupational training, and supporting services.

Title V Older Workers

Provides job placement assistance to low income workers who are over the age of fifty-five.

Employment Service

(Department of Workforce Development)

Provides free job search and placement (“labor exchange”) services. Included are counseling, testing, occupational and labor market information, assessment, and referral to employers. Customers can access a wide range of resources, including the Internet.

Unemployment Insurance

(Department of Workforce Development)

Provides payments to people who are out of work through no fault of their own.

Trade Adjustment Assistance

(Department of Workforce Development)

Provides training, monetary support during training, job search assistance, and relocation allowance to workers certified by the federal government as having lost their jobs due to foreign imports.

NAFTA Transitional Adjustment Assistance

(Department of Workforce Development)

Provides the services described above under Trade Adjustment Assistance to workers certified by the federal government as having lost their jobs due either to imports from Canada or Mexico or a move of production to those countries.

Veterans Employment and Training Programs

(Department of Workforce Development)

Develops job and training opportunities and provides case management for veterans, especially those with service-connected disabilities.

Food Stamps

(Division of Family Resources)

Helps low-income families buy the food needed for good health through monthly provision of Food Stamps.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

(Division of Family Resources)

Provides cash assistance to children under age 18 who do not have the financial support of a parent because of death, absence from the home, unemployment, or physical/mental disability.

IMPACT

(Division of Family Resources)

Provides readiness, case management and referral, community work experience, job placement and retention, and supporting services such as transportation to people who receive Food Stamps and/or TANF.

Community Services Block Grant

Community Action Agencies use these funds for local projects on drug treatment, information and referral networks, nutritional assistance, housing assistance, counseling, employment/training, emergency assistance, and others. These services are targeted for low-income families and individuals.

Adult Education and Literacy

Provides free adult basic education for people who are at least 16, withdrawn from school, lacking in high school level skills, or needing to “brush up” on basic skills. Areas of instruction include math, language, reading, GED preparation, English as a second language, life skills, and computer communications.

National and Community Service Act Programs

Learn and Serve America, AmeriCorps, and the National Senior Service Corps offer a range of national and community service jobs. These may be full-time or part-time, volunteer or paid (stipend). This is not intended as permanent work.

Vocational Education

Provides vocational and technical training at the post-high school level through the Carl Perkins Act.

Welfare to Work Grant Program

Provides employment and employment support services to recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) who have received TANF for thirty months or are within twelve months of losing benefits. Services may include some type of supported work as a basic service plus other services such as basic educational skills training, job seeking skills, and job keeping skills.

Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Employment and Training Programs

Provides funding to communities for customized local initiatives. These programs offer a wide variety of services intended to increase the economic self-sufficiency of participants.

Client Assistance Program

See page 13.

Other Programs

Other programs may also be partners, as approved by the local Workforce Investment Board and Chief Local Elected Officials.



**“The Road To Work:
An Employment Resource Guide”**

Receipt Statement

The information in this resource guide has been reviewed with me. I have also been given a copy of the resource guide.

Customer Signature
(Parent, Guardian, or other representative, if applicable)

Date

Counselor Signature

Date



State of Indiana

Family and Social Services Administration

402 W. WASHINGTON STREET, P.O. BOX 7083
INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA 46207-7083

www.IN.gov/fssa

The Indiana Family and Social Services Administration
does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed,
sex, age, disability, national origin, or ancestry.

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