Working

with Indiana Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Information for Teachers About Student Referrals

What is Vocational Rehabilitation Services?

Indiana Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) is a state agency that works with individuals with all types of disabilities to obtain or maintain their employment goals. Individuals are eligible if they 1) have a physical or mental condition that makes it hard for them to work and 2) can demonstrate that they need and could benefit from VR services to help them prepare for, find, or keep a job.

What is the VRS process?

This is an overview of the process VRS uses to identify who is eligible for services and what services a person might need to become employed:

- Referral
- Application
- Eligibility Determination
- Development of Individual Plan for Employment
- Service Implementation
- Employment
- Case Closure

(Note: VRS will determine eligibility in 60 calendar days or less following application.)

There are many ways teachers can participate in and enhance this process for individual students:

- Communicate regularly, annually at a minimum, with the VR counselor assigned to your school about students you are considering for referral.
- Work with the VR counselor to develop a process for the Referral and Application as well as a follow-up process that works for both the student, counselor, and the school.
- Provide detailed information about the student's strengths, interests, support needs, work experiences, goals for the future, etc. *See specific suggestions on page 2.*

What is a VRS referral?

"Referral" is the process of contacting the local VRS office or the VR counselor liaison for the school to let them know that an individual is interested and potentially needs assistance in education/job training, finding a job, and/or keeping a job. Anyone can refer a person to VRS by contacting the VR counselor liaison or their local VRS office. You can find a VRS Office Directory at http://www.indiana.gov/fssa/files/VRS_Area_Offices.pdf.

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Which students should I refer to VRS?

Teachers should refer any student they think *might* need VR services to help them become employed. It is the VRS counselor's job to determine whether or not a student is eligible. Students do not necessarily need to be receiving special education services to be eligible. For example, a student with a 504 plan or a student with a physical disability might be eligible even though he or she is not receiving any special education services.

When should I contact VRS about a student who may be eligible?

VRS policy says "as early as appropriate, but no later than the beginning of the last semester of the projected exit year." Once consent is obtained (see below), the school and the VR counselor must "confer at least one time per year" to review the status of transition-age students. During that annual meeting, teachers and counselors should also make appropriate referrals to VRS.

Does the student need to give written consent before I refer him/her to VRS?

Yes. Per Article 7, the school must first obtain written consent from parents or students of legal age before contacting VRS and disclosing confidential educational records and before inviting a VR counselor to a case conference.

What information should I send to VRS?

Teachers should send information along with the referral that will help the VR counselor get to know the individual student and help both of them make informed decisions during the eligibility, application, assessment, and planning processes.

As a teacher you have a wealth of information about students that can be very useful to the counselor. It is important to gather any information that would be helpful to VRS in the assessment for determining eligibility (e.g., the IEP, recent educational evaluations, transition assessments). The more you can send to VRS about who the student is (e.g., strengths, interests and support needs), the better!

However, you should refer a student even if you don't have all of this information. School personnel can refer a student by providing the student's

- name,
- date of birth,
- address,
- phone number, and
- identified disability.