Virginia DRS Transition Services Guide

A Roadmap to Successful Employment for Virginia's Youth

2007

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VIRGINIA DRS TRANSITION SERVICES GUIDE
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GUIDE PURPOSE

Message from DRS Commissioner Jim Rothrock:

The Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS) is committed to improving the independence and employment of persons with significant disabilities, including youth in transition.

The DRS Transition Services Guide details how DRS can be a part of a team, comprised of the student, family member(s), high school personnel, higher education personnel, employers and agencies, that assists youth in the transition process. Moreover, the Guide includes recommended practices for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselors, as they assist youth with disabilities in preparing for life beyond high school.

The DRS Education Services Unit welcomes input and feedback on this Guide and any other resources developed and disseminated by DRS for Transition Services.

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*Youth and Student:* These two terms are used interchangeably throughout the Guide. Depending on agency definition, youth can refer to an individual up to age 26. Schools do not serve students after their 22nd birthday.
PREFACE

Background

Youth with disabilities represent about one-third of DRS' consumers. Virginia's 2007 State Plan for Vocational Rehabilitation and Supported Employment indicates that the projected number of youth who will need transition services is increasing. In order to meet the need, DRS assigns a VR Counselor to each of Virginia's school districts.

Research indicates that not only will the number of youth needing vocational rehabilitation services to transition from school to work increase, but these youth will also be seeking contact with the State VR Program earlier in their high school career to begin transition services.

Strategic Plan

Interagency collaboration is a key element in future success for youth with disabilities after they leave high school and is a critical element leading to higher employment and post-secondary education outcomes.

DRS' strategies to enhance collaboration include:

- Increasing outreach efforts to school personnel, students, and families to educate them on the availability and purpose of DRS transition services;

- Educating VR Counselors on how to effectively serve students in transition at all stages of their high school career;

- Developing a teamwork approach to service provision that includes the involvement of the student, family members, school personnel, and the VR Counselor;

- Ensuring there are cooperative agreements in place in every school so that students receive the services that they need in a "seamless" process;

- Collaborating with the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) and other state agencies and organizations to develop innovative systems for the delivery of transition services.

Early involvement is the key to success for youth-driven transition planning.
PART ONE: INTRODUCTION TO TRANSITION SERVICES

🌟 What are Transition Services?

Transition Services help youth with disabilities develop skills and formulate plans to move from high school to an adult life that includes opportunities for employment, higher education, independent living, and community involvement.

Transition services are:

- Defined and funded by the federal government and are implemented by state agencies and local school districts;

- Provided through a coordinated set of activities for youth with disabilities that promotes movement from school to post-school activities including post-secondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation; and

- Based on the individual strengths of the student, taking into account the student’s preferences and interests, and includes instruction, related services, community experiences, development of employment, and other post-school living objectives, and if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

Early involvement is the key to success for youth-driven transition planning.
How the Nation Supports Youth in Transition

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act 2004 (IDEA 2004), and The Rehabilitation Act, are three laws having the greatest impact on youth in transition.

**Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (P.L. 101-336):** Also referred to as the ADA. This law recognizes and protects the civil rights of people with disabilities and prohibits discrimination. The ADA covers a wide range of disability, including physical conditions, emotional illness and learning disorders. The ADA requires accessibility for the workplace (Title I), state and local government services (Title II), business (Title III) and telephone service for people who have hearing or speech impairments via a relay system (Title IV). For more information go to: [www.dol.gov/esaregs/statutes/ofccp/ada.htm](http://www.dol.gov/esaregs/statutes/ofccp/ada.htm)

**Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (P.L. 108-446):** IDEA 2004 reauthorizes the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997. School-to-work transition services, under the provisions of the 2004 law, are now required at the age of 16 for students with disabilities and will include academic and functional goals. The goals shall be based on age-appropriate assessments and include independent living skills, if needed. IDEA 2004 aligns closely to the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), helping to ensure equity, accountability and excellence in education for children with disabilities. For more information go to: [www.frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgibin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=108_cong_public_laws&docid=f:publ446.108](http://www.frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=108_cong_public_laws&docid=f:publ446.108)

**The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, reauthorized in 1998 under Title IV/WIA:** This law establishes a national Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program to assist people with disabilities to obtain, regain, maintain, or advance in employment. The law requires DRS and education agencies to coordinate student transition from education services provided under IDEA 2004 to VR services available through DRS under The Rehabilitation Act. Unlike education services, the VR Program is not an entitlement and not all applicants will meet the federal eligibility criteria, (for example, those not eligible to work in the U.S.) For more information go to: [www.doleta.gov/usworkforce/wia/wialaw.txt](http://www.doleta.gov/usworkforce/wia/wialaw.txt)
Collaborative Participants in Transition Planning

Student – The student is the key player in the process. The role of students is to be present, literally and figuratively, at all stages of their transition process. Active participation by students is critical; they should have input into the path that their transition plan takes. Students must learn to take responsibility by working with VR professionals to establish and meet their goals. This means they must keep appointments and inform others of changes that may occur, i.e., address, phone, disability status, financial status, etc. Many students cannot do this alone.

Parent/Guardian/Family Members – These essential participants assist the students in providing information about their disability, family finances, as necessary, and support them in their endeavor toward independence and employment, encouraging cooperation and providing necessary legal permissions when students are not at the age of majority. Families most often provide natural supports to youth while in school and when they exit school.

School Personnel – These important team members may include the student's teacher, guidance counselor, transition specialist or administrator. School principals can be a guiding force in working with the VR Counselor and youth with disabilities. They control the activities in their building; therefore, it is very important that the VR Counselor have a good working relationship with the principal. The responsibilities of school personnel include referring students with disabilities whom they feel may benefit from DRS involvement. The provision of access to disability information for the VR Counselor, within school confidentiality rules and guidelines, aids the VR Counselor in determining eligibility for services. The school should provide a meeting space for the VR Counselor, student and family to meet that lends itself to confidentiality. The provision of appropriate transition activities that will assist the student in selecting a career goal is a key responsibility. School personnel must also provide academic instruction as specified in the IEP that which guides the student towards the development of skills they need to be successful in independent living and employment.

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors – VR Counselors plays a pivotal role in the transition process of achieving successful employment. They explain and suggest services and how DRS might assist students in setting career goals and obtaining employment. The VR Counselors can work with the student's
school staff to provide appropriate transition assessments.

A thorough explanation of the VR system and youth's rights and responsibilities must occur at intake and at other stages in the VR process. VR Counselors gather necessary information to determine eligibility. It is important for VR Counselors to get involved three years prior to a student's exit from high school to establish rapport and begin scheduling activities that will aid in determining an appropriate vocational goal. Guidance and counseling, a core service, must be continually provided throughout the process. It focuses on, but is not limited to, education about disability, compensation strategies, job seeking and retention skills, employment plan strategies, goals and objectives, independent living and job placement activities. The Individualized Plans for Employment (IPE) must be completed prior to the student exiting high school. VR Counselors are also responsible for seeking assistance from community agencies, Employment Service Organizations (ESOs) and employers, locating the appropriate supports that will increase the likelihood of employment success, and informing the youth and their family of these possible supports. They are accountable for keeping abreast of employment trends, legislative changes and educational opportunities, as well as, educating school personnel about DRS' mission and purpose. VR Counselors also provide guidance and information to those students whose employment plan requires post-secondary education or training.

DRS Education Services Unit - DRS devotes three positions to lead state transition initiatives; a manager and two transition coordinators. These individuals provide training, technical assistance and support for VR Counselors. These personnel ensure that cooperative agreements between school districts and local DRS offices are up to date and effective. Additionally, they provide state and national leadership in transition in collaboration with their partners at the VDOE. The Virginia Transition Forum, the Virginia Inter-Community Transition Council (VITC) and the Transition Practitioner's Council (TPC) are some of the events they co-lead with their Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) partners.
PART TWO: THE ROLE OF DRS IN THE TRANSITION PROCESS

Since many of DRS' referrals come from the youth population, strong partnerships must be formed between DRS and VDOE in order to serve youth with the best transition services possible.

DRS provides education and training for school personnel and encourages school personnel to assist them in their outreach efforts. In addition, DRS encourages school personnel to allow a trained VR counselor to work with students and families to determine eligibility decisions.

It is the role and responsibility of DRS to provide outreach to our critical transition partners and to promote DRS' potential services.

DRS is a voluntary program. VR Counselors will work with a student who is eligible for DRS services and who is ready to plan for future employment.

atório for Services

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program is a federal eligibility program – not an entitlement program. Not all applicants will meet the federal eligibility criteria. For example, those not eligible to work in the U.S. are ineligible for VR services, but they may be referred to other DRS programs and non-employment programs such as Centers for Independent Living (CILs), Community Services Boards (CSBs), etc. DRS gives consideration to any individual with a disability; however, a case may be closed on evidence that a person’s disability is too severe to achieve employment. While school personnel may be trained to recognize appropriate referrals to DRS, only a VR Counselor is qualified by federal law to determine eligibility.

All students who have a disability, even students who are not served in school by special education or 504 plans, may be considered for VR transition services; however, DRS eligibility criteria must be met and financial needs of the family must be considered for cost services beyond assessment. The VR Counselor can work with students and their families to discuss these issues and help them chart a plan of action that will lead to employment.

Referrals of students for DRS services often come from school personnel to the VR Counselor assigned to their school district. Recommendations for a student
to be referred to DRS should be written into the student’s Individual Education Plan (IEP).

The following criteria must be considered for any person to be eligible for DRS services and a VR Counselor will consider these criteria for any student who applies for services. The student must:

- be eligible to work in the US;
- have a documented disability or perceived as having a disability;
- have a disability that is a barrier to employment;
- be able to benefit from VR services; and
- require services to prepare for, enter, engage in or retain employment.

Services that can be provided without regard to financial need include but are not limited to:

- Guidance and counseling
- Diagnostics
- Vocational assessment/evaluations
- Disability awareness counseling
- Vocational and career path counseling
- Job seeking and retention counseling
- Access to Employment Resource Centers, job searching and finding employment leads
- Job placement
- On-the-job training
- Follow along services after job placement
- Personal Assistance Services (PAS)

Services which may require financial participation on the part of the student/family include but are not limited to:

- Training services
- Transportation
- Rehabilitation technology/accommodations
- Long Term Rehabilitation Case Management (LTRCM)
- Centers for Independent Living services
- Supportive services
Who to Refer

Students in transition must apply to DRS if they wish to be considered for VR services. Any student who has a disability or is suspected of having a disability may be referred to a VR Counselor for DRS services. Typically, transition coordinators or special education teachers make the referral for the student to the VR Counselor who serves their school. Students may refer themselves. Families may refer their child, or others interested in the student’s welfare may refer the student for VR services. The best approach to referring a student is to communicate with the local DRS office. DRS office locations may be found at the following link on the website: www.vadrs.org/officelist.asp

When to Refer

All high school transition students who are DRS clients must have an employment plan in place before graduation. Referrals should be made three years prior to school exit and should be included in the student’s IEP. This allows time for the VR Counselor to get to know the student and start career exploration and program planning. Also, some students may need complex services coordinated by multiple agencies over an extended period.

A student who is ready to begin planning for their future employment goal and is willing to work with his or her transition team to develop a plan should have a VR Counselor involved in the planning process. The VR Counselor may assist the student by providing guidance and counseling, appropriate assessments and assist the student in identifying steps that will lead to employment.

See the VR Process for Transition Chart and Companion Documents located in Appendix A for suggested activities.

How to Refer

Most schools have personnel who are familiar with the VR Counselor assigned to their school and may already have a practice in place to communicate with the Counselor. To find the local DRS office to obtain information regarding the VR Counselor assigned to their school, call 800/552-5019 (V), 800/464-9550 (TTY) or click on www.vadrs.org/officelist.asp. See Referral Sheet in Appendix C.

A signed release of information form from the student or his/her parent is required for the VR Counselor to look at the student’s educational records that
confirm the student's disability. The following documents are suggested for this purpose:

- Most current psychological, medical and any specialty evaluations such as vision, mobility or vocational
- Individualized education plan (IEP)
- 504 Education plan
- Eligibility minutes
- Other assessments, as appropriate

The Referral Process

The following process is recommended to guide education personnel to refer students in high schools for VR services. Some school localities have an established practice that differs from this suggested process; however, it is essential that VR Counselors get involved early in order to establish a rapport with the student and provide information for the student and his/her family to make informed choices.

1. Identify student who may benefit from DRS services.

2. Obtain a signed release from student's family or from student if he/she is 18 years of age.

3. Complete a referral sheet and including the reason for referral. (See sample in Appendix C.)

4. Attach a signed release to the referral form.

5. Make contact with VR counselor assigned to the school.

6. Assist in arranging a meeting time and meeting space for the VR Counselor, the student, and the student's family.

7. Provide the VR Counselor with information confirming the student's disability.

School personnel can expect the VR Counselor to:

1. Meet with school personnel to explain DRS services.
(2) Provide school personnel with appropriate forms for referral.

(3) Contact the school on a regular basis to provide assistance in reviewing and choosing students who may be eligible for services.

(4) Attend IEP meetings with the written consent of guardian/parent/student who has reached the age of majority when DRS is likely to provide or pay for transition services.

(5) Participate in an IEP by providing appropriate information about the student to the IEP meeting.
PART THREE: SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

\textbf{WWRC Transition Services}

Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center (WWRC), located in Fishersville, Virginia, provides people with disabilities a variety of services to realize their optimal independence and employment. A significant percentage of WWRC's admissions are youth in transition. The Center is strongly committed to the success of youth in transition.

Applicants must be 18 years of age or older to be admitted for residential services, unless they are requesting a program designed and staffed for minors. Programs include numerous medical, vocational, and technological services and are provided in a residential or day setting.

Youth under the age of 22 may be eligible for the Post-Secondary Rehabilitation Transition (PERT) Program, which is located on the WWRC campus.

For further information on programs offered at WWRC, go to: www.wwrc.net.

\textbf{Post-Secondary Rehabilitation Transition (PERT)}

Post-Secondary Rehabilitation Transition (PERT) is a highly effective school-to-work transition initiative for eligible youth with disabilities in all of Virginia's local school divisions. Students are selected by the PERT Team, which consists of the PERT Transition Field staff, the VR Counselor and school personnel. If selected, students attend a ten-day program during which time they will receive a comprehensive set of evaluations that assess vocational strengths and aptitudes, independent living and leisure skills, and functional abilities, as well as social, interpersonal, and personal adjustment skills. Findings and recommendations are used by the PERT Team with students and families to address school-to-work transition components of the IEP process. Students may also be eligible to return to PERT for a two-week situational assessment that more clearly defines and refines student skills and interests. For further information about the PERT Program, go to: wwwrc.virginia.gov/pertprogram.htm#overview.

\textbf{PERT is a highly effective school-to-work transition initiative. (See sample case of David J. on page 25-26)}
Higher Education

Youth whose career goals require post-secondary education or training programs may be assisted by DRS. The youth and their VR Counselor must have established a mutually agreed upon employment goal in order for DRS to assist with post-secondary programs. The VR Counselor must be able to document that post-secondary training is essential for employment in the established employment goal, and the individual must demonstrate capability and aptitude (based on existing education records, College Board scores, vocational evaluation, work history, etc.) to succeed in the proposed post-secondary education or training program. Post-secondary education or training must be included in the Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) prior to the service being provided.

Post-secondary school training services are subject to consumer financial participation policy. The VR Counselor must complete a Client Financial Statement (RS-13) and a Post-Secondary Training Comparable Benefits and Financial Assessment form (RS-25).

Guidance and counseling will be a major service provided for any DRS client who is attending higher education. VR counselors are skilled in working with a consumer to assist in the development of self-advocacy skills, time management, identifying learning styles, and providing assistance in establishing linkages with Disability Support Offices on college campuses.

Cooperative Agreements

DRS leads the process of developing cooperative agreements with each school district. These agreements specifically outline the services, roles and responsibilities of DRS and the school districts in offering successful school-to-work transition opportunities for students.

Every three years, DRS leads cooperative agreement meetings between each of the school districts in Virginia and the local DRS office that serves the school district. The cooperative agreement is a formal document, signed by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) and DRS, describing collaborative transition services and a structured partnership to jointly plan, implement and
evaluate transition services to reach common goals and provide seamless services to students in their transition years. Additionally, the outcome of the agreement is to encourage and provide for the collaboration and integration of efforts in the transition process. The agreement has measurable goals that can be reviewed annually and renewed every three years.

Some of the components addressed in the cooperative agreement:

- Provide means for ongoing communication to coordinate resources, improve referral procedures; and reduce duplication of services;
- Define roles and responsibilities of each agency related to transition;
- Outline objectives that identify activities and services that enhance current efforts in transition as well as needed activities and services.

![State Transition Networks](image)

State Transition Networks

DRS provides leadership to several state transition initiatives each year. Described below are some of the events. These activities provide opportunities for education and training for professionals, families and youth regarding the role of DRS in transition services.

The Virginia Transition Forum is sponsored by the VDOE and DRS and is traditionally held in March of each year. The conference was initiated in 1985 and attracts professionals from many transition related disciplines. Although educators and VR personnel are always heavily represented, youth and their families are encouraged to attend and to make presentations at the conference. For more information click on: www.virginiatransitionforum.org

Virginia Inter-Community Transition Council (VITC) was established in 1991. The council, a community of practice in transition, is committed to influencing policies, practices and the identification of resources that foster the implementation of quality transition services and statewide planning. VITC serves as a model of collaboration for localities and their efforts to develop and coordinate transition services for individuals with disabilities. The Council recognizes the need for many stakeholders to be involved in the transition planning process and to set high expectations for not only youth in transition but also for those who provide the leadership for transition services. The active participation of multiple agencies corroborates this value.

The work of VITC has produced helpful products for transition providers to use for service delivery. One such product is The Transition Matrix, a comprehensive
listing of transition providers from multiple agencies across the Commonwealth of Virginia. Also, VITC developed Fact Sheets which contain descriptions of multiple transition related services. To view The Transition Matrix and VITC Fact Sheets, go to: www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/sped/transition/vtr.shtml

Transition Practitioners' Council (TPC) is a state council comprised of transition practitioners. TPC’s mission is to provide a forum to exchange ideas, offer support, and network problem-solving strategies that enhance the implementation of quality transition services throughout Virginia.

TPC meets twice a year and traditionally has a program related to current Transition issues. Participants receive transition updates from the VDOE and DRS. They also have opportunities to network and problem-solve with other transition providers.

Local Transition Councils are established in nearly every DRS region. These councils meet to network and problem-solve transition issues on a local basis. Local VR Counselors and school transition leaders initiate, develop, and lead the councils throughout the state.
PART FOUR: SPECIAL SECTION FOR YOUTH AND FAMILIES

Frequently Asked Questions

Who is eligible for DRS services?

To be eligible for DRS services, the person must have a physical, mental, emotional, sensory or learning disability that interferes with their ability to work. They must also need DRS services in order to get or keep a job.

As a parent, do I have any input?

Yes. Participation by parents is very important, especially when your child is under age 18. You know your child best. Go with them to the first appointment with the VR Counselor. Stay in touch with the VR Counselor to make sure that planning for post-high school activities is consistent with what you and your child are developing with the school.

What services does DRS provide?

If a youth is found eligible for services, they will work with their VR Counselor toward developing an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) that establishes a vocational goal and identifies steps to meet the goal. Depending on what the youth requires, services might include guidance and counseling, vocational assessments, work evaluations, skills training at a vocational school, Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center or college, support services while attending training, adaptive equipment, supported employment and job placement. Other services include job seeking skills, employer referrals and on-the-job services.

At what age or grade should I become involved with DRS?

We recommend that students be referred to DRS three years prior to exit from school. For students with complex disability issues, it may be appropriate for earlier referral. The VR Counselor can also offer consultative services during the middle school years. This timing allows the Counselor to work with the student and the school to help identify a suitable job goal and suggest job readiness activities that can take place during school. Before the student finishes school, the VR Counselor will help to develop the Individualized Plan for Employment
(IPE) to arrange for additional training, education, or job placement services still needed beyond school to achieve the job goal.

Does DRS provide vocational assessments?

Yes. Vocational assessments are a very important service and can be provided to students who are unsure of their vocational interests and abilities.

Is this information confidential?

Yes. DRS will not request or release any information without signed consent. If the youth is under 18, the signed consent of a parent or guardian is required. If your son or daughter is unable to understand the consent process, a parent or guardian’s consent would be required at any age.

Will DRS pay for updated psychological testing for college?

If the student’s school is unable to provide psychological testing for college, DRS may consider purchasing this service on a case by case basis. DRS’ provision of psychological testing would be for the purpose of determining eligibility and for appropriate planning purposes in the development of the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).

What is a Job Coach?

A job coach is an important part of the supported employment process. Supported employment is a service which is provided for persons with the most severe disabilities. These services are provided by a vendor, which is an employment service organization that DRS or the student and their family contract with to provide services. These services might include job trials, job placement, job training and follow-along services. A job coach, who is employed by the vendor, will get to know the youth with the help of the VR Counselor and provide side by side assistance to the youth in locating an appropriate job. Once hired, the job coach will work with the youth to help teach them the job duties. The job coach will then fade their support from the job as the youth becomes more able to perform the job duties. Follow-along is a service provided to some youth who need ongoing support, but minimal contact with a
job coach. Follow-along is provided after the job coach fades. The job coach also assists the youth in the interview process and in finding natural supports on the job. There are supported employment vendors located all across Virginia.

What is Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center (WWRC)?

Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center (WWRC) is a vocational training center located in Fishersville, VA, and is part of DRS. VR Counselors refer their adult clients (age 18+) to the Center for a variety of services which include vocational training in a number of areas, academic support, life skills training, medical services consisting of therapies such as physical, occupational and speech, and assistive technology evaluations. WWRC also offers brain injury services, a spinal cord rehabilitation program and return to work services. WWRC receives referrals from VR Counselors who evaluate the youth's needs and ability to live in a dorm setting or, if needed, a medical setting. The length of stay at WWRC varies, depending on the services that are needed for the client to function more independently and to get and keep a job. For more information speak to a VR Counselor in your area.

What is PERT?

PERT stands for Post-Secondary Education Rehabilitation Transition. PERT is a program offered at WWRC for youth as young as 16 who are selected by a team made up of a student's teacher, PERT staff and the VR Counselor. Students who are selected will go to PERT for ten-days for assessments that include vocational evaluation, social and recreational evaluations, and independent life skills evaluations. Students will live in a dorm setting and are closely supervised by staff. After they return home, a report is sent to the parent, school and VR Counselor, and a meeting is scheduled to review their experience and set goals for the student. The experience is designed to guide IEP planning and help the student to be a successful adult and employee. The student's teacher or VR Counselor can provide more information about PERT.

If I decline services while in school, can I apply after I graduate?

Yes. DRS provides services to persons with disabilities of all ages. We encourage early involvement; however, some students may not be ready for DRS assistance until they have matured and tried to be successful on their own.
While a student in high school, why should I be thinking about DRS?

You need to make the right connections before leaving school, so there is no gap in services. After a student with a disability leaves school, no single agency is required to provide or coordinate all needed services. While in school, students are guaranteed a free and appropriate education. Most adult services are based on being eligible for that service. Each agency has its own application process and way of providing services.

Can DRS help me gain skills to live on my own?

The VR Counselor can offer guidance and counseling regarding independent living. Referrals can be made to the local Center for Independent Living (CIL) in your area as well. The CILs provide assistance and information towards residential placements, as well as counseling about disability awareness, community resources, etc.

I already have a job. How will DRS help?

DRS can help you look at your current job to see if the hours, wages, and the vocational goal are appropriate. Other important factors include whether the job is temporary or permanent, and if it’s a good match for you. Your VR counselor and you can discuss this and decide if DRS can help.

How much do services cost?

Some services are free of charge. There is no cost for guidance and counseling provided by the VR Counselor or for assessments needed to determine eligibility or a vocational goal. There are also a number of other services that are free of charge, such as job development, on-the-job training and unpaid work experiences. Once eligibility is determined, financial resources are considered towards assistance with the vocational goal. A family may be expected to share in some of the costs towards the vocational goal, such as training, college costs and supported employment. If a student receives SSI or SSDI they are considered to meet the agencies financial means participation test and are automatically financially eligible for DRS to assist them towards reaching their
vocational goal. If they do not receive SSI or SSDI, then financial participation is
determined based on the families most recent tax return, if the family claims the
youth as a dependent. The VR Counselor will discuss financial planning as part
of developing the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).

As a parent/guardian, how will vocational rehabilitation services affect my
child's SSI or SSDI benefits?

The VR Counselor can advise you generally about how your child's benefits may
be affected when the youth begins earning wages. However, you should
directly contact the Social Security Administration to obtain specific information
about the impact of your child's employment on benefits and about available
work incentive allowances. There are counselors and benefits specialists that
have been trained to provide appropriate information.

How does DRS help with the writing of my child's IEP?

Once your child is found eligible for DRS services and the VR Counselor is invited
to the IEP meeting, the VR Counselor can provide helpful information about
success in the adult world and what the school can do to help prepare them.
The VR Counselor can encourage the school to provide academic and hands-
on experiences that will help get your child get ready for employment.

How does DRS work with other agencies?

Inform your VR Counselor so that all services can be coordinated to meet the
student's needs. DRS works with many other agencies such as Community
Services Boards CSBs), Social Services, Social Security Administration (SSA),
Centers for Independent Living (CILs), etc. The VR Counselor can link youth to
necessary services in the community. This will ensure a smooth approach and
avoid duplication of services.

How do we access services?

To begin the process, you can contact a VR Counselor in an office near you.
You may call DRS directly at 800/552-5019 (Voice) or 800/464-9950 (TTY) and ask
which counselor or office serves your area. Also, with your permission, you may
ask your child's teacher, transition coordinator, guidance counselor or school
administrator to make a referral to DRS.
vocational goal. If they do not receive SSI or SSDI, then financial participation is determined based on the family's most recent tax return, if the family claims the youth as a dependent. The VR Counselor will discuss financial planning as part of developing the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).

As a parent/guardian, how will vocational rehabilitation services affect my child's SSI or SSDI benefits?

The VR Counselor can advise you generally about how your child's benefits may be affected when the youth begins earning wages. However, you should directly contact the Social Security Administration to obtain specific information about the impact of your child's employment on benefits and about available work incentive allowances. There are counselors and benefits specialists that have been trained to provide appropriate information.

How does DRS help with the writing of my child's IEP?

Once your child is found eligible for DRS services and the VR Counselor is invited to the IEP meeting, the VR Counselor can provide helpful information about success in the adult world and what the school can do to help prepare them. The VR Counselor can encourage the school to provide academic and hands-on experiences that will help get your child ready for employment.

How does DRS work with other agencies?

Inform your VR Counselor so that all services can be coordinated to meet the student's needs. DRS works with many other agencies such as Community Services Boards (CSBs), Social Services, Social Security Administration (SSA), Centers for Independent Living (CILs), etc. The VR Counselor can link youth to necessary services in the community. This will ensure a smooth approach and avoid duplication of services.

How do we access services?

To begin the process, you can contact a VR Counselor in an office near you. You may call DRS directly at 800/552-5019 (Voice) or 800/464-9950 (TTY) and ask which counselor or office serves your area. Also, with your permission, you may ask your child's teacher, transition coordinator, guidance counselor or school administrator to make a referral to DRS.
How do I receive classroom accommodations in college?

The VR Counselor can work with you and the ADA coordinator from the college or university's Office for Students with Disabilities. Often youth are reluctant to ask for accommodations in college and the VR Counselor can counsel and guide them regarding the importance of this towards their overall success. They can advise the students along with the college representative on the documentation needed to request accommodations. Some or all of the accommodations students received in high school may also be available on the college level. The college's ADA Coordinator can request those accommodations from professors, if there is adequate documentation of the disability and the limitations it causes. While there are no IEPs in college, students can and do receive accommodations that level the playing field and provide equal access.

When can DRS begin funding for services?

DRS can pay for services that will help the youth reach their vocational goal, if the youth meets the DRS financial means participation test and if the service needed is not provided by the school the youth attends, or if the youth has exited school and needs services that require funding.
PART FIVE: APPENDICES/USEFUL TOOLS

Appendix A – Sample Cases

Sample Case: David J.

David J. was 16 years old and three years from exiting high school when he was referred to DRS as a potential Post-Secondary Education Rehabilitation Training (PERT) candidate. He was working towards a modified standard diploma and had a specific learning disability in reading comprehension. David was also diagnosed with Asperger’s Syndrome and Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). He had poor social skills and limited awareness of how to relate to others appropriately.

David was found eligible for DRS services and was considered to be most significantly disabled with limitations in communication, read at a fourth grade reading level, and had difficulty with verbal communication. He also had limitations in interpersonal skills, as he had no social interaction other than with his family. This led to David’s inability to appropriately interact with teachers, peers, etc. Additionally, he had difficulty with social cues, often leaving him vulnerable to ridicule and teasing. Another functional limitation was self-direction; he often needed prompting to start a task or to move from one task to another, as he had great difficulty when his routine was interrupted.

Despite his limitations, it was felt that David was an appropriate PERT candidate, and in the summer between his sophomore and junior years of high school, he entered the PERT Program at the Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center (WWRC) in Fishersville, Virginia. His time at WWRC was a good experience for David, and he was recommended for vocational training in areas of business/clerical and materials management. David was also recommended for a situational assessment. Through discussions with his VR Counselor, David realized he was best suited for clerical work in a setting that had limited interaction with others.

David’s situational assessment the following year was successful. He showed strengths in his chosen area and he decided he wanted to return to WWRC for a training program. Possible classroom accommodations were discussed and his class schedule included keyboarding and business math. A resource class, which focused on reading improvement, was also strongly encouraged. Through his vocational program, it was arranged for him to work in the office of a local business, along with assistance from a job coach provided by the school.

After graduating with his modified standard diploma, David was accepted to WWRC for training. He entered the business training program to
become an office clerk in August of that same year. While at WWRC he made a few friends for the first time in his life. After his training was completed, he returned to his community and worked with his VR Counselor toward job placement.

Ultimately, a part-time job was located in an office setting with a local business. His parents indicated that his exposure to PERT and WWRC greatly influenced his self-esteem and his life goals. David now has plans for the future that includes working full-time and living independently.

Sample Case: Monica L.

Monica L. was referred to DRS in her sophomore year of high school by the Assistant Principal. As a result of her Spina Bifida, Monica's ambulation and mobility declined over the years, and in turn, her work tolerance and work skills were also affected. Monica, however, had a 3.2 grade point average and wanted to attend college. At the time of referral, she was unsure what type of study she wanted to pursue, but felt that her inability to perform physical work necessitated college training. She required a wheelchair to ambulate and was allowed to use the elevator and change classes five minutes early.

Upon meeting eligibility for DRS services, it was decided that a vocational evaluation would be beneficial in determining Monica's future vocational direction. Her results revealed a strong interest and ability in math and accounting. A number of services, including job shadowing with the school bookkeeper, helped further explore her interest in this area. Informational interviews with professionals in the area of accounting also allowed further career exploration. Her interest increased and her VR counselor encouraged Monica to enroll in business and accounting-related classes while still in high school to build her skills.

During her senior year, Monica applied and was accepted to a local community college. Her VR Counselor discussed with Monica and her parents DRS sponsorship in college. Monica and her family were in agreement with this, as she could continue to live at home and receive physical support and transportation from her family and the local transit authority. In addition, she had always hoped to drive, so a driving evaluation was scheduled with a local rehabilitation agency that provided this service. It was discovered she could drive with hand controls. It was agreed that when a car was purchased by or for Monica, DRS would consider assisting with hand controls, as she met the financial means participation test for DRS due to her receiving SSI.

Also during her senior year, she completed the Federal Application for Student Aid (FAFSA). In reviewing the results of the RS-25, she received grants and assistance from DRS. An IPE was developed with an identified vocational goal of Accountant. She was counseled regarding issues with mobility and the
challenges of attending a college campus. Monica was directed to the college Office for Students with Disabilities, where she was able to register based on her limitations with mobility.

Monica successfully completed her college career and with the assistance of the DRS counselor, placement counselor, and technician, she was able to secure a position at a local employer in their business office. She was able to purchase a car and DRS provided financial assistance towards the purchase and installation of hand controls. Her case was successfully closed with Monica employed and with much greater independence.

SAMPLE CASE: John M.

John M. was referred to DRS by his guidance counselor at his high school two years prior to graduation from high school. He was in a self-contained classroom for students with mild to moderate mental retardation and he worked in an awareness program at a regional vocational/technical school, which focused on basic work skills. Based on his full-scale IQ of 55, along with his limited ability to read, write and perform more complex math calculations, John was found eligible for DRS services. He was also found most significantly disabled due to serious limitations in communication, self-care, mobility, work skills, and work tolerance.

In talking with John, his parents, and teachers, the VR Counselor was able to pinpoint some strengths that would assist him in successful employment. Not only was John physically strong, he was a very likeable and cooperative person. Moreover, his parents were very supportive and had a strong work ethic.

Over the two years while John was in school, various adult agency services were identified and the family applied for case management services through the local Community Services Boards (CSB). Supported employment was discussed as a viable option for John to become successfully employed after graduation. His school was encouraged to provide with as many transition activities as possible to assist John towards independence.

During his graduation year, John participated in the school's "job coach" program which allowed him to gain work experience in the school cafeteria. Later, John was able to work in the community with consistent supervision at a local store where he unloaded trucks and opened boxes in their storage area.

An Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) was also developed for John during his senior year. This included supported employment, local bus route training, job seeking skills training, and independent living skills training (e.g., budgeting, opening and maintaining a bank account, etc.) through the local Center for Independent Living (CIL). John and his family were given the opportunity to meet all the supported employment vendors, and he and his family chose the one they felt best suited John's needs. In addition, John
participated in several situational assessments, which allowed him to explore positions such as dishwasher, warehouse worker and janitor. John and the job coach felt he was best suited for the warehouse worker position. Ultimately, a job was located at a local Military Base Exchange where John would load and unload large tractor trailers of merchandise.

The job coach worked steadily with John for about five to six weeks and was able to fade support services appropriately. The job coach also provided travel training so that John could independently take the local bus to and from work. Natural supports on the job were established with a supervisor and co-worker for much needed assistance. Subsequently, John’s DRS case was successfully closed with him working in a full-time position.
Appendix B

THE VR PROCESS CHART AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS
## VR Process for Transition Referral and Services

**Employment is the goal for all services provided by the Department of Rehabilitative Services**

### DRS/LEA Collaborative Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3-4 years prior to school exit</th>
<th>2-3 years prior to school exit</th>
<th>1-2 years prior to school exit</th>
<th>Exit Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>Technical Assistance/Consultations</td>
<td>Solicit referrals</td>
<td>IPE Development</td>
<td>Employment Related Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Information</td>
<td>Screen referrals</td>
<td>Career Development Activities</td>
<td>Post-Secondary Education Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education for families and school personnel</td>
<td>Take applications</td>
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<td>Independent Living Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate on Advisory Councils/Transition Councils</td>
<td>Conduct intake interview</td>
<td>Referrals to other agencies/services</td>
<td>Vocational Training/Exploration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide information to students through group settings</td>
<td>Determine eligibility</td>
<td>Benefits planning</td>
<td>Higher Education Guidance and Counseling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Career Assessments</td>
<td>Self Advocacy Check</td>
<td>Job Placement/Job Retention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Career Development Activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Benefits Planning</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The above menu of activities is for the purpose of joint planning among LEAs and DRS counselors. It is not meant to be inclusive or prescribed for all students. DRS eligibility criteria, order of selection and a student’s willingness to participate may have an effect a student’s ability to benefit from DRS services. VR Counselors may be invited to attend IEPs on a case by case basis throughout the process.
The following sample activities are intended for guidance for the VR Counselor and Local Education Agency (LEA) personnel to consider as a student prepares for school exit. The activities are intended to be part of the collaborative processes; some being DRS led or initiated and some that are joint activities. The purpose of the activity chart and listed activities is to provide a communication tool to share information regarding a student who may be referred to DRS for services.

3-4 YEARS PRIOR TO SCHOOL EXIT

Technical-Assistance/Consultations - This may be provided in group settings or on an individual basis to students, families and/or school personnel.

Example: VR Counselor may attend an IEP meeting of a 14 year old student who will require a multitude of services. The counselor may provide consultation on potential services available as the student progresses through school and what may be available when the student exits school. The counselor responds to questions regarding employment services for a student who has a specific disability.

Public Information

Example: VR Counselor may attend a civic meeting to speak about DRS; participate in a Transition Fair to provide literature and answer questions; attend a "College Night" to speak to parents about disability services on college campuses, or speak at a school staff development activity.

Education for Families and School Personnel

Example: VR Counselor may provide guidance and information regarding DRS on an individual basis to families and/or school personnel, or in group settings such as a family training or staff development activity.

Participate on Advisory Councils/Transition Councils

Example: VR Counselor may serve on an advisory council, such as a special education or career and technical education advisory council or a transition council to represent a DRS field office and will contribute information regarding DRS services and assist in the
decision making process of the council. The counselor responds to questions regarding employment services for a student who has a specific disability.

Provide information to students through a group setting
- VR Counselor may be invited to a class by school personnel to speak on career related information or disability related information.
- VR Counselor may provide paper and pencil interest, or career aptitude inventories, job seeking and job keeping informational activities.

2-3 YEARS PRIOR TO SCHOOL EXIT

Solicit Referrals
- VR Counselor communicates with education contact to determine potential referrals to DRS.
- VR Counselor and school contact obtain universal permission form to review student’s records.
- VR Counselor provides school contact with literature, web information about DRS and a business card, to give to parents at student’s IEP.

Screen Referrals
- School contact provides VR Counselor records to prepare for student referrals.
- School contact and VR Counselor discuss potential students to consider for referral to DRS.
- School contact provides VR Counselor with reasons for DRS referral.

Take Application
- Locality driven as to where and when applications are taken
- Gather assessment information (psychological testing, medical records, educational evaluations, school attendance records) provided by the school contact

Conduct Intake Interview

Determine Eligibility

Career Assessment
- PERT Program where and when appropriate
• Paper and pencil career and interest inventories
• Hands on assessment by DRS evaluator

Career Development Activities

• Job shadowing
• Mentoring
• Job site visits
• Informational interviews
• Visit DRS office/career center

Benefits Planning
• Refer student’s family to other services agencies such as Social Security or Community Services Board.
• Provide Work World exercise to student and family.
• Discuss differences between eligibility and entitlement.

1-2 YEARS PRIOR TO SCHOOL EXIT

Develop Individual Plan for Employment (IPE)

Career Development Activities
• Resume development
• Job application instruction
• Mock interviews
• Job seeking skills instruction

Post-Secondary Education Options
• Investigate colleges and/or training programs
• Investigate financial aid

Self-Advocacy Check
• Does student understand disability?
• Is student able to articulate needs, able to ask for needed accommodations on the job?
• Does student have appropriate disability documentation?

Referral to other agencies/services
• Identify other possible adult service agencies needed for transition.

Benefits Planning
EXIT YEAR

Employment Related Activities
- Supported employment
- Situational assessments
- Career search assistance
- Job application form completion
- Resume development
- Job interview coaching
- Guidance and counseling for job retention
- Job Shadowing
- Informational interviews
- Job Placement assistance

Post-Secondary Education Activities
- Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
- Complete the Post-Secondary Training Comparable Benefits & Financial Assessment – RS-25
- Explore financial aid/scholarships/grants
- Assist with completing college/training program applications
- Introduce to college disability services counselor
- Refer student’s family to other services agencies such as Social Security or Community Services Board
- Provide Work World exercise to student and family
- Discuss differences between eligibility and entitlement
Appendix C

REFERRAL SHEET
DEPARTMENT OF REHABILITATIVE SERVICES

STUDENT REFERRAL SHEET

*Please attach a copy of the student’s current eligibility meeting minutes, IEP, psychological, vocational evaluations, and a signed release to share confidential information.

Please print.

STUDENT NAME_________________________ First Middle Initial Last

Student #___________________ BIRTHDAY___/___/___ Male___ Female___

*Please get SS# prior to referral. Month Day Year

DISABILITY ________________________________

ADDRESS ________________________________ VA ____________

Street City Zip Code

PARENT/GUARDIAN NAME: ______________________________

Circle one: Mr. Mrs. Ms.

HOME TELEPHONE NUMBER ( ) ______________________________

PARENT’S WORK TELEPHONE NUMBER ( ) ______________________________

HIGH SCHOOL ____________________________ PRESENT GRADE ________

PLANNED GRADUATION DATE ____________________________ Month Year

BRIEFLY DESCRIBE HOW YOU FEEL STUDENT MIGHT BENEFIT FROM DRS SERVICES:

School Contact Person (Person completing form)

________________________________________________________________________

Telephone Number: ( ) ________________________ Date ____________

The Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS) is interested in school youth who have an impairment or a disability. If indicated that the student has a disability, and a vocational rehabilitation counselor determines that the disability would be a vocational handicap, the student may be eligible for assistance in planning for and achieving his/her chosen vocational objective.
Helpful Links

- Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS): www.vadrs.org
- Virginia Department of Education (VADOE): www.pen.k12.va.us
- Virginia Commonwealth University Training and Technical Assistance Center (VCU T/TAC): www.vcu.edu/ttac
- Radford University Training and Technical Assistance Center (RU/TAC): www.eduweb.education.radford.edu/ttac
- James Madison University Training and Technical Assistance Center (JMU T/TAC): www.ttac.cisat.jmu.edu
- Old Dominion University Training and Technical Assistance Center (ODU T/TAC): www.ttac.odu.edu
- The College of William and Mary Training and Technical Assistance Center (W&M T/TAC): www.wm.edu/ttac
- George Mason University Training and Technical Assistance Center (GMU T/TAC): www.ttac.gmu.edu
- Virginia Community College System: www.vccs.edu
- Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center: www.wwrc.virginia.gov
- Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI): www.vdbvi.org
- Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (VDDHH): www.vddhh.org
- Virginia Board for People with Disabilities (VBPD): www.vbboard.org
- T/TAConline: www.ttaconline.org
- Virginia Division on Career Development and Transition: www.vadcdt.org
- National Division on Career Development and Transition: www.dcdt.org
- Council for Exception Children: www.cec.sped.org
- Virginia Council for Career and Technical Education: www.vacetc.org
- Virginia Workforce Network: www.vwn.virginia.gov
- Virginia’s Career Connect-One Stop Workforce Development Systems: www.careerconnect.state.va.us