

State of North Carolina  
Department of Health and Human Services

NC Division of  
Services for the Blind

# VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION HANDBOOK

Our mission is to enable individuals who are blind or visually impaired to achieve their goals of independence and employment.

[www.ncdhhs.gov/dsb](http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dsb)  
CARE-LINE 1-800-662-7030  
For Spanish translation

The North Carolina Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) Vocational Rehabilitation Program (VR) assists persons who are blind or have a significant vision loss to fulfill their employment goals and to achieve independence.

- As an individual of VR services from DSB, you will choose an employment goal and the services required to achieve your goal based on information provided to you by your DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor about your strengths, skills, abilities, interests, resources, and experience.
- The most important person in this process is YOU. You have the lead role in making your plan for employment a reality.
- Your DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will work with you towards your employment goal, will inform you of the services DSB can provide, and will partner with you until you successfully achieve your employment goal.

This booklet can provide information about this process. If you have other questions, please ask your DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor.

# Steps in the Vocational Rehabilitation Process

Applying for Services



Learning More about You



Determining Eligibility



Planning and Developing an Individual Plan for Employment



Moving Towards Employment



Becoming Successfully Employed!

## **STEP 1: APPLICATION**

### **Who should apply?**

- Do you have a disability of blindness or visual impairment?
- Are you having trouble getting or keeping a job because of your vision loss?
- Do you believe Vocational Rehabilitation Services would help you obtain, regain or retain a job?
- Do you want to work?

**If you answered yes to all these questions, you may be eligible for DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Services.**

### **How do you apply for DSB VR Services?**

- Call the DSB Office nearest to you and speak with the DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor who works in your county. The telephone numbers for the offices are on the back of the Handbook.
- The DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will arrange a time to meet with you in a convenient location.
- If you would like to begin completing the application before the appointment, let the DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor know and the application will be mailed to you, or you may obtain a copy from the DSB website: <http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dsb>.

## **STEP 2: LEARNING MORE ABOUT YOU**

During the first meeting with your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, you will learn more about the ways DSB can help you achieve your employment goal and your DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will learn more about you and your employment needs.

After completing the application, your DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will ask you to share information about your disability. This may include information from medical reports or other records, and may include some new evaluations.

The assessment of this information is necessary to provide you with information so you can begin making choices about your employment goal and about the services that will be required for you to reach your goal.

## STEP 3: ELIGIBILITY

After a careful assessment of the information about your disability and your employment situation, your DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will determine if you are eligible for services. The eligibility determination will be made within sixty (60) days after your application for services is submitted. To extend this time period, you and your DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will need to discuss and agree on a specific extension date.

If you are an SSI recipient or SSDI beneficiary and you want to work, you are presumed to be eligible for DSB services, unless your disability is such that services from DSB would not result in achieving your employment goal.

If you do not receive SSI or SSDI, your eligibility is based on the following factors:

- You are blind or have a significant visual impairment;
- Your impairment results in an impediment to employment for you; and
- You require Vocational Rehabilitation Services to prepare you to secure, to retain, or to regain employment.

In other words, you must be blind or have a visual impairment that significantly affects your ability to work, and you require DSB VR assistance to get and keep a job.

The process can move quicker if you stay involved and if you provide the information needed as soon as possible.

You can help in the process in several ways.

Provide your DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor with any information that you may have, such as:

- Medical records and other documents about your disability;
  - Records or copies of checks from SSI or SSDI if you receive benefits; and
  - A list of names, addresses and telephone numbers of doctors, professionals and organizations you have consulted regarding your disability.
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- Find out all you can about the Vocational Rehabilitation process and ask your DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to explain anything you don't understand.
  - Keep your appointments and come on time. Call the office if you can't keep an appointment. Let your DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor know if you move or change your phone number.
  - Follow through and complete your part of any actions you and your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor agree upon.

## STEP 4: Planning and Developing an Individual Plan for Employment (IPE)

The next step is for you to develop your Individual Plan for Employment (IPE). The IPE is a written plan of action so that you can achieve your employment goal.

You are the lead partner in developing your

IPE. You will have the opportunity to choose:

- \* Your employment goal and setting;
- \* The specific Vocational Rehabilitation Services; and
- \* The providers and settings of the chosen services.

To help you make the best choices, you and your DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will:

- Discuss your unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, and interests;
- Talk about the ways your vision loss affects your ability to work;
- Explore the world of work;
- Acquire additional evaluations as required;



Your DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will explain the IPE components, DSB employment services, and DSB VR guidelines, and will give you information on financial commitments and other topics to help you complete the DSB forms as needed.

You can choose to:

- Have your DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor assist you in developing the IPE;
- Develop the IPE by yourself; or
- Develop the IPE with assistance of someone else.

If you choose to write your IPE or write it with the assistance of someone else, DSB forms must be used and will be provided by your DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor. Your DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will be available to assist you with any questions during this process.

Your IPE must be approved and signed by the DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor before any services can be provided.

All information shall be provided in the appropriate mode, such as standard print, large print, tape, CD, or Braille. Your approved copy of the IPE will be made available in your preferred mode. Interpreters shall be provided.

Your IPE will have the following components:

- Your employment goal;
- Timeline to achieve your vocational goal;
- Description of the services you will require;
- The names of the service providers;
- Timeline to begin the services;
- Description of the methods to receive the services;
- Description of the criteria that will be used to evaluate your progress;
- Your responsibilities, your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor's responsibilities, and the responsibilities of others involved with your IPE;
- Outline of your participation in paying for part of the services on the IPE, if applicable; and
- Identification of comparable benefits you may apply for and secure to assist with the provision of services.

## Employment Services

The Division of Services for the Blind VR Program offers services that are required for you to reach your employment goal. Your DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor must approve the IPE in writing before you can begin receiving any services or make any purchases as part of the IPE.

Some services provided without consideration of your income include:

- Vision Assessments
- Counseling, Guidance, and Referral
- Assessments to guide your training and career choices
- Orientation and Mobility Services
- Personal and Vocational Training
- Low Vision Services
- Assistive Technology Evaluations
- Job Seeking Skills and Job Placement Services
- Job Retention Services
- Reader Services
- Supported Employment Services
- Sign Language and Foreign Language Interpreters

Some employment services can only be provided to individuals who have financial need. These include:

- Physical and Mental Restoration Services
- Sensory and Technological Aids
- Tools and Equipment
- Books and other Training Materials
- Post-employment Services
- Occupational Licenses

The financial needs requirements for the Division of Services for the Blind are established by the North Carolina General Assembly.

## **STEP 5: Moving Towards Employment**

In order to achieve success, you and your DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor must be full and active partners as you work towards achieving your employment goal.

### **It is your responsibility to:**

- Provide your DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor with information about your vision and any other disabling situation;
- Maintain contact with your DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, keep appointments, and share any changes in your address, telephone number, health, job, or any other areas that would affect your plans for employment;
- Apply for and use comparable services and benefits to help defray the cost of your plan of services (such as financial aid, grants, insurance, Medicaid, Medicare, Workers' Compensation);
- If necessary, participate financially in your plan;
- Attend and fully participate in training programs and classes, and provide your DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor with copies of your progress reports and grades;
- Fully participate in your job search and job placement activities;
- Be sure that you have written approval before purchasing any goods and services that you want DSB to pay for; and

- Reach an agreement with your DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and sign a written IPE amendment if there is a requirement for substantial changes in your IPE.

While receiving services from the North Carolina Division of Services for the Blind, you are expected to accept responsibility for making independent, sound decisions in your interactions with staff and your peers. It is important to remember that DSB offices are public facilities and that you are expected to conduct yourself in a manner befitting of a public building. In order to maintain a safe and supportive environment, please note the following instructions:

- NO WEAPONS
- NO THREATS, VERBAL OR PHYSICAL
  - NO AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR,
    - VERBAL OR PHYSICAL
  - NO HARASSMENT
  - NO PROPERTY DAMAGE

**It is your DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor's Responsibility to:**

- Offer guidance and counseling;
- Assist in the coordination of services;
- Keep your information confidential;
- Review your progress on an agreed-upon schedule or at

least once per year;

- Inform you of resources available to you and give you specific referral information as appropriate;
- Reach an agreement with you if there is a need for substantial changes in your IPE and develop a written amendment for your signature and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor approval;
- Give you information about the Client Assistance Program (CAP) and how to contact them; and
- Give you information about your rights including your right to appeal any decision made by DSB about your case.
- Provide all information in the appropriate mode, such as standard print, large print, tape, CD, or Braille, and provide interpreters.

## **STEP 6: Plan Completion**

**After you have achieved your employment goal and have been working for at least 90 days without need for any more DSB VR services, your DSB VR record will be closed indicating successful employment.**

Circumstances may arise before you reach your employment goal that may result in your record being closed and all services being terminated. These include:

- You are not eligible for services;
- You become ineligible for services;
- We cannot locate you;
- You move out of state;
- You are not available to complete the assessment for determining eligibility;
- You decline to accept or participate in DSB VR Services; or
- You fail to cooperate in your Vocational Rehabilitation Program.

You will have the opportunity for full consultation with your DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor before your records are closed.



## YOU HAVE RIGHTS

- **Non-discrimination:** When applying for or while you are receiving services, you are protected against discrimination due to race, type of disability, national origin, sex, age, or religion.
- **Confidentiality:** The information we have about you is confidential and generally cannot be released without your written consent.
- **Choices:** You have the right to choose your employment goal and services, and to select service providers and methods of obtaining the services. Your DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor will provide you with information you need so that you can make the best choices. You have the right to request a change in the IPE services if required for you to achieve your employment goal. An amendment to your IPE will be developed to document any changes to the IPE.
- **Timeliness:** You have the right to be informed of your eligibility for services within sixty (60) days from the date of your application, unless you agree that an extension of time is warranted or a trial work period is required. After you are determined eligible for services, an IPE is to be in place within ninety (90) days, unless an extension of time is agreed upon with your DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor.

**Right of Appeal:** There are several ways to resolve disagreements if they should arise between you and your DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor.

You and the DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor should first try to resolve any concerns about your rehabilitation case together. If the concerns cannot be worked out, you should contact your DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor's Area Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor for assistance.

You can contact the Client Assistance Program (CAP) for assistance. CAP is available to assist you if you are having difficulty receiving the Vocational Rehabilitation Services you feel you need. CAP can help you by trying to negotiate with you and the DSB staff. You can contact CAP at (919) 855-3600 (Voice or TTY) or toll-free at 1-800-215-7227.

You also have the right to file an appeal when you are in disagreement with decisions made in your rehabilitation case. A request for an appeal must be in writing and be sent to the Area Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor. Some problems can be resolved when a mediator talks with you and the DSB staff. At other times, it might be necessary for you and the DSB staff to present your concerns to an impartial hearing officer who will make a recommendation as to how the matter should be resolved. Your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, the Area Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor in the local DSB office, or the Client Assistance Program (CAP) can give you details about any of these steps.

## **CLIENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (CAP)**

The Client Assistance Program (CAP) is available to assist you if you are having difficulty receiving the Vocational Rehabilitation Services you feel you require or if you have questions about services that you feel are not being answered by your DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor or the Supervisor. CAP is designed to help you and your representative, if you have one, understand your rights and responsibilities and to assist you in presenting your concerns to DSB. CAP advocates are not DSB employees. They serve as your advocates. If you cannot achieve resolution to concerns about your services at the local level, CAP may help you with your request. If your concerns continue, CAP may be able assist you in preparation for mediation, an Administrative Review or Fair Hearing.

You can contact CAP at:

**Client Assistance Program  
(919) 855-3600 (Voice or TTY)  
or toll-free at 1-800-215-7227**

## **HOW TO CONTACT US**

### **Asheville District Office**

(828) 251-6732, or toll-free at 1-800-422-1881

### **Charlotte District Office**

(704) 563-4168, or toll-free at 1-800-422-1895

### **Winston-Salem District Office**

(336) 896-2227, or toll free at 1-800-422-0373

### **Raleigh District Office**

(919) 733-4234, or toll free at 1-800-422-1871

### **Fayetteville District Office**

(910) 486-1582, or toll-free at 1-800-422-1897

### **Greenville District Office**

(252) 355-9016, or toll free at 1-800-422-1877

### **Wilmington District Office**

(910) 251-5743, or toll-free at 1-800-422-1884

You can reach the Raleigh State Office  
At (919) 733-9822 or (919) 733-9700, or  
Toll-free at 1-866-222-1546

## **YOU ARE VERY IMPORTANT TO DSB**

Every individual is different. Your Individual Plan for Employment will be based on your specialized and individual needs so you can successfully reach your employment objective.

If you have any questions, please refer to this Handbook or ask your DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor.

### **Your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor is:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Area Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor is:**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**This Publication is available in Braille, Large Print, Computer Disk, and Tape Cassette. This request should be made to the local DSB District Office.**

**This handbook can also be accessed through the following process:**

**Go to website [www.ncdhhs.gov/dsb/](http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dsb/)**

**scroll down to the bottom of the screen and click on “ABOUT US” scroll down the screen and click on “DSB FORMS”**

**scroll down and open [“dsb-4005-A-Handbook-VR”](#).**