

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program Support for Students in Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary Programs (CTPs)

Overview

Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) operates Ohio's Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program. The purpose of the VR program is to assist individuals with disabilities to obtain and maintain competitive integrated employment.

Several Ohio colleges and universities operate Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary Programs, which are authorized under the Higher Education Opportunity Act. CTPs are programs that are offered by institutions of higher education, designed to support students with intellectual disabilities who are seeking to continue academic, career, technical, and independent living instruction at an institution of higher education in order to prepare for gainful employment.

This fact sheet is designed for students and families considering participation in CTP programs to provide information about how VR Services can be provided in coordination with participation in a CTP program.

Application and Eligibility for VR Services

Youth with disabilities may apply for VR services as early as age 14 and are encouraged to apply as early as possible in the transition process. OOD partners with local school districts and other agencies like county boards of developmental disabilities to coordinate services. Eligibility is based on four criteria:

1. The individual has a physical, cognitive and/or mental impairment;
2. The impairment impacts or affects the individual's ability to work;
3. The individual can benefit from VR services in terms of an employment outcome; and
4. The individual requires VR services to prepare for, secure, retain, or regain employment consistent with the individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and informed choice.

Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)

Once the youth is determined eligible for services, the VR Counselor will work with the youth and their family and their person-centered planning team, to identify an employment goal as well as the services needed to achieve this goal. This process is individualized to meet the needs of the youth and results in the development of the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). Only services that are necessary for the youth to reach their employment goal can be provided by the VR program.

Examples of VR services that may be determined necessary for the youth to reach their employment goal may include services to help identify career interests, obtain a job and keep a job.

OOD may be able to contribute to the cost of college tuition from an institution of higher education if the youth has an employment goal that requires a recognized postsecondary credential, which means a credential consisting of an industry-recognized certificate or certification, a certificate of completion of an apprenticeship, a license recognized by the State or Federal Government, or an associate or baccalaureate degree.

Provider Selection

As a part of the IPE development process, the youth with a disability will identify the service providers they want to use for services that are included on their IPE. Some Ohio CTP programs are also approved providers of VR services. In instances where a CTP program has met OOD's accreditation requirements and has an approved provider agreement, youth and families may select the CTP as their VR provider as well. Individuals and families can use the Provider Search tool at OOD's website to conduct a search for OOD-approved providers in their geographic area: <http://providersearch.ood.ohio.gov/>

Service Delivery

Once the IPE has been developed, the VR Counselor will authorize for services in accordance with the IPE. If the youth requires vocational preparation services, and the CTP is an OOD provider, the VR Counselor may authorize for those services, as needed, for as long as the youth continues to make progress towards their vocational goal. If possible, these services can be coordinated with the school semester.

Case Closure

The decision to close a VR case is determined on a case-by-case basis. When the youth has achieved their employment outcome as identified in their IPE, and maintained it for at least 90 days, the VR Counselor may close the case. If long-term supports are necessary for the youth to maintain employment, the VR Counselor will work with the youth's case manager to coordinate the transition. Case closure may or may not coincide with completion of the CTP program or the school semester.

Case Study: Joshua

Joshua is eligible for VR services and plans to participate in a Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary Program (CTP). His VR Counselor has determined through the IPE development process that Joshua requires Career Exploration and Job Readiness Training to gain needed work and interpersonal skills. Joshua selects an OOD-approved provider, who is also a CTP, to provide this vocational service. His VR Counselor authorizes for services for the length of time necessary for Joshua to gain needed work and interpersonal skills, which is evaluated monthly through progress reports and discussion with Joshua, his family, the provider, and other members of his person-centered planning team. Services can continue to be provided as long as Joshua is making progress and the services are necessary to achieve his employment goal. These services can be coordinated with Joshua's school semester schedule, when possible. Once Joshua is ready to look for employment, other services can be provided, including job development, job coaching and retention services.

Case Study: Samantha

Samantha is eligible for VR services and plans to participate in a Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary Program (CTP). Her person-centered planning team has determined that Samantha is ready to begin her job search and her VR Counselor authorizes for job development services to help her obtain employment. Once employment is obtained, if Samantha requires job coaching services to learn the tasks of the job, these services can be provided as necessary to help her maintain employment. After a minimum of 90 days of stable employment, Samantha's case may be successfully closed by OOD. If Samantha requires ongoing supports to maintain her community job, her VR Counselor and members of her person-centered planning team can coordinate long-term supports through other funding sources (developmental disabilities waiver services, etc.) prior to closing the case. If Samantha is still attending the CTP, she may choose to continue to participate in that program, without OOD support, while maintaining her employment.