

Missouri Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Transition “A Guide for Work Experience Coordinators & School Personnel”

❖ VR Eligibility Criteria

- There is a difference between **vocational rehabilitation criteria** and **educational diagnostic criteria** to be eligible for services. Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) eligibility guidelines require the client have a mental, physical or learning impairment which would make it difficult for the student *to prepare for, obtain or maintain employment*. The educational (school) diagnostic criteria will focus on disabilities that affect *academic performance*.
- Due to restricted funding, the Missouri Division of Vocational Rehabilitation will be unable to provide services to all eligible individuals with disabilities. In accordance with a statewide **Order of Selection** that was implemented on October 1, 2003; individuals with the most significant disabilities will be served first, and other eligible individuals will be placed on a waiting list for VR services. Eligible individuals (students) will be placed in one of the following categories:
 - Priority Category I:** An individual with the most significant disability.
 - Priority Category II:** An individual with a significant disability.
 - Priority Category III:** An individual with a disability.
- Students eligible for vocational rehabilitation services through Rehabilitation Services for the Blind will not be affected by the Missouri Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Statewide Order of Selection.

❖ VR Referral Process

1. **Obtain the following forms from your VR Counselor (VRC)** and complete prior to the student intake interview, unless the VRC chooses to complete these forms with the student themselves during the initial intake interview:
 - ◆ Questionnaire for VR Services (orange)
 - ◆ Health Assessment Questionnaire (gray)
 - ◆ Release of information form (white)
 - ◆ Characteristics of Maladaptive Behavior form (for students referred who have an IQ between 70-85).
 - ◆ Koller Adolescent and Adult Behavior Scale-Revised (KAABS-R) form (for students referred who have a diagnosis of LD or ADD/ADHD).
2. **Schedule VR Student Intake Interview:**
 - a) Assist the student/parents in completing VR forms, and obtain copies of the student's latest IEP (which reflects VR referral), and diagnostic summary/evaluation report. This information should be provided to VR at the student intake interview or as soon as possible.

- b) Arrange a meeting between the VR Counselor, student, parent/guardian, and other school personnel (as appropriate) to review/complete VR forms, and conduct the VR student intake interview.
- c) During the student intake interview, the VR counselor may also consider/address the following topics related to the student's disability (in addition to information contained in the student's IEP and diagnostic summary):
 - Guardianship
 - Self-direction
 - Receptive, expressive, verbal or written communication skills
 - Use of assistive technology/devices
 - Mobility
 - Ability to follow directions/instructions
 - School/work schedule modifications, if any
 - Social/interpersonal skills
 - Work skills
 - Other areas of functioning that may affect employability

3. *Upon completion of the student intake interview, and if determined appropriate, the VRC will officially open the student's case with Vocational Rehabilitation.*

❖ **Notification of VR Eligibility**

1. After VR officially opens the student's case, the VRC will review and evaluate all medical/psychological information received and determine the student's eligibility. Once VR eligibility and priority category are determined, the student will receive written notification (a letter) of eligibility and the assigned priority category. ***A copy of the eligibility letter will also be sent to the WEC/school district.*** Students with the most significant disabilities, ***priority category I*** will be served first, and other eligible students will be placed on a waiting list until funds are available.
2. If the student is determined eligible and assigned to the waiting list, the letter of eligibility to the student will include the following:
 - Eligibility determination.
 - Priority Category assignment.
 - Student's right to appeal, including information regarding the Client Assistance Program.
 - Referral to one-stop and other agencies, if appropriate to meet the student's needs.

❖ **Notification/Provision of VR Services**

1. If the student is determined eligible and the eligibility letter indicates they have been assigned to ***priority category I***, appropriate VR services may be provided immediately, in coordination with the student's IEP.

2. Students who have been determined eligible to receive VR services, but are placed on a waiting list because they have been assigned to a priority category that is not open due to insufficient funds; may be provided technical assistance and consultation (including counseling and referral for job placement) to assist them in preparing for, securing, retaining, or regaining employment. These students may also be referred to other appropriate Federal and State programs, including statewide workforce investment career centers.

3. Eligible students who have been placed on a waiting list will receive a letter from the VRC when funds are available. ***A copy of this letter will also be sent to the WEC/school district.*** This notification of funds available letter will inform the student that funds have become available and VR services can now be provided. The letter will also inform the student that they have 30 days to let the VRC know they are still interested in receiving VR services. If the student does not respond in 30 days, their case will be closed with VR. Therefore, it is important that the WEC prompt the student to respond to this letter as soon as possible.

❖ **The Cooperative Work Experience Program (COOP):**

A. **Best Practice Guidelines**

- Coop is defined as a program for students with disabilities whose IEP reflects a need for work experience in a competitive setting, and who are also eligible as clients of Vocational Rehabilitation.

- Prior to releasing any student from school and awarding credit through the COOP program, the following “best practice” guidelines apply:
 - The student must be determined eligible for VR services, AND
 - The WEC must have a copy of the student’s VR eligibility letter in the student’s school file, AND
 - The student’s IEP must reflect student participation in a competitive, paid (at least minimum wage) work experience activity/job through the VR COOP program.

- When student participation/placement in the COOP program has been determined appropriate by the IEP team and Vocational Rehabilitation, the student’s Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) should be developed by the VRC as soon as possible. Both the IEP and IPE should reflect this coordination of transition (COOP) services. A copy of the IPE should also be provided to the WEC/School District.

- Eligible students who are on a waiting list for VR services may still participate in the COOP program, even though the VRC will not be able to develop an IPE with that student (providing the student’s IEP clearly documents the COOP experience, and the school district has a copy of the VR eligibility letter on file).

- The student's school class schedule should be adjusted to reflect the COOP experience. As per the COOP agreement, the student needs to be released from school **a minimum of one hour per day in order to have their work hours counted for HS credit.**
- The WEC will supervise the COOP experience by visiting the student on the job site, checking with the student's employer regarding their work performance, obtaining copies of the student's work schedule and pay stubs, and providing necessary supports to assist the student in obtaining or maintaining his/her job.
- The student should report any changes in their job status to the WEC immediately. Both the WEC and the student should communicate this information to the VR Counselor as soon as possible.
- WEC/School District should have a plan in place if the student loses their job.

B. Administrative Considerations

- Review and establish within your district general COOP program guidelines that outline the following:
 - WEC responsibilities to include release time, supervision requirements, job development activities, and transportation arrangements.
 - Roles and responsibilities for the student, parent, school, and employer. Some school districts require the student and/or parent to sign a COOP contract that outlines their roles and responsibilities. Roles and responsibilities may change depending upon each student's individual needs, but general guidelines should remain constant.
 - Required documentation for the assigning of a grade and awarding of credit for the COOP program, which may include employer evaluation forms, employee progress reports, and copies of student's pay stubs.
 - Insurance coverage for the student, if appropriate.
 - The procedure in which credit for the COOP program will be awarded. DESE recommended best practice guidelines for the awarding of credit indicate the student **may** earn up to four units of credit annually.
 - Student participation in COOP work experience activities is in accordance with Fair Labor Standards Act.
- Documentation of the student's participation in the COOP program must be included in the IEP. COOP should be documented as an activity or strategy on the transition planning page of the IEP. Specific goals, with objectives and benchmarks may also be written to address vocational needs of the student, as appropriate. The Division of Special Education recommends documentation also be included on the services page

of the IEP. “Transition services” like all other services, must include minutes, frequency, location and duration. This should be shown as special education minutes because the student is using this time to meet the goals and objectives on their IEP (e.g. special education services in general education setting). However, when it comes to figuring PLACEMENT, these minutes should NOT be counted as “time out of regular” because they are working in the community setting.

❖ **Sheltered Workshop Participation**

Students released from school to go to work at a sheltered workshop **can not** be released and given credit through the COOP program. If the IEP team recommends sheltered workshop participation; the school district should request VR certification for the student, and provide a copy of the most current evaluation report and IEP (with documentation of sheltered workshop as the most appropriate work experience activity at this time). When the student starts work, credit should be awarded in accordance with school district policy through the IEP process. When placing a student off-campus in a sheltered workshop setting, an agreement also needs to be reached between the school district and the local sheltered workshop regarding average daily attendance funds.

❖ **Assessment**

Vocational Rehabilitation may be able to provide a Comprehensive Transition Assessment (CTA), Supported Employment Assessment (SEA), Specific Job Objective Evaluation, Exploratory Job Objective Evaluation, or a Comprehensive Evaluation to eligible students who need assistance in identifying vocational options, interests, skills and abilities. Check with your VR Counselor to determine **when and what type** of assessment/evaluation services may be available to students in your school district.

❖ **VR Services**

Transition services which **may** be provided to students without officially opening a case and establishing eligibility, or for those students who are eligible but have been placed on a VR waiting list include:

- Consultation *to students and families through class presentations, career fairs, etc.*
- Technical assistance *to schools through in-service presentations, etc.*
- Participation in IEP meetings.
- Sheltered workshop certification.
- Job placement referral.
- Cooperative Work Experience Program (COOP). * Students MUST be VR eligible.

VR services which **may** only be provided to eligible students who have been notified that funds are available and VR services can now be provided include, but are not limited to:

- Assessment/evaluation services.
- Individual career guidance/counseling.
- Assistance in finding employment/job development services.
- Cooperative Work Experience Program (COOP).
- On-the-Job-Training.
- Supported employment job coaching services.
- Assistive technology devices/services

❖ Senior Referrals

Any student in the school district with a physical, mental or learning impairment may qualify for VR services, and should be considered for referral.

The WEC, guidance counselor, school nurse or other personnel from the school district may refer the student by simply contacting the VR Counselor. Students are usually referred to Vocational Rehabilitation by January or February of their senior year. It is important however, to check with your school district and the VR Counselor to determine the specific referral process for graduating seniors.

For more information on VR services that may be provided post-graduation, check with your VR counselor.

Vocational Rehabilitation
Contact Names and Phone Numbers

VR Counselor: _____

VR District Office: _____

VR Phone Number: _____

VR Counselor for Senior Referrals (if different from above):

