

EXPLORE

The World of **Work**

DISCOVER

Your **Career**



A Guide for Education Staff on the Vocational Rehabilitation Journey



★ **DC Department on Disability Services (DDS)** ★

Provides the residents of DC with information, oversight, and coordination of services for people with disabilities and those who support them.

Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA)

RSA works with eligible persons with disabilities to choose support services and career options that help them transition into and maintain employment. RSA provides individualized short-term services, based on the person's needs.

Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA)

DDA works with persons with intellectual disabilities to coordinate individualized supports and services needed to lead a self-determined life. DDA provides long-term supports.

Who Should Apply

Persons with disabilities who desire to work.

When

When a person begins to prepare for post-secondary options.

Who Should Apply

Persons with intellectual disabilities who desire to have independence, choice, and control over their own lives through person-centered service planning.

When

Age 18 or older.

RSA and DDA have separate application processes; however, persons with disabilities can apply to both with the help of an RSA VR Specialist or DDA Service Coordinator.

In most cases, a person should apply to both RSA and DDA if he/she has a documented intellectual disability, requires long-term supports, and wants to work.



This brochure provides guidance on the DDS RSA's process for working with your school to help students achieve long-term employment. Plans are based on the student's informed choice and what is mutually agreed upon between the student and the RSA Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Specialist throughout the process.

DDS RSA Youth in Transition Services

The RSA Youth in Transition Services Units work with eligible students with disabilities who want to work to provide Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services while they are still in school to help them:

- Explore interests and abilities,
- Plan for how to achieve long-term employment goals, and
- Prepare for careers.

Roles & Responsibilities

RSA assigns an RSA Transition Specialist and a Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Specialist to each school to work with your staff and students throughout the process.

RSA Transition Specialist—Primary contact prior to eligibility determination

- Provides outreach, consultation, and technical assistance to school staff, students, and families about the RSA process
- Receives applications from school staff
- A list of RSA Transition Specialists and their school assignments is available at www.dds.dc.gov

RSA Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Specialist, also referred to as "Counselor"

- Conducts intake interviews
- Determines eligibility
- Provides one-on-one counseling to students
- Coordinates with school staff to align IPE and IEP Transition Plan

School Staff (e.g. LEA Representative, Transition Coordinator)

- Gathers documentation
- Submits applications to an RSA Transition Specialist
- Coordinates logistics and prepares students for intake meetings
- Coordinates with VR Specialist to align the IPE and IEP Transition Plan

Student

- Actively participates and exercises informed choice throughout the process



1 Open Your Case with DDS RSA

Application

Your school staff should assist a student with applying to RSA when the student begins discussing transition and expresses an interest in employment in the Individualized Education Program (IEP), which could be when the student is entering the final 2 years of high school or earlier.

Major Activities

- 1 RSA Transition Specialist provides application materials to your school.
- 2 Student completes and signs application materials and consent forms with help from your school staff. The parent or legal guardian may need to co-sign the application form if the student is under the age of 18.
- 3 Your school staff submits completed applications and required documentation to the RSA Transition Specialist.

Application Packet Checklist

- ✓ Completed and signed application form
- ✓ Signed RSA consent form to obtain or release information
- ✓ Current and relevant disability records (e.g. evaluations and assessments)
- ✓ Transition planning & services reports (e.g. IEP Transition Plan)
- ✓ Academic achievement
- ✓ Attendance records

Required Documentation to Determine Eligibility

- Medical/disability report or evaluation
- Government issued photo ID or photo ID with proof of address (e.g. driver's license, DC resident card)
- SSI & SSDI Award Letter
- Social Security Card



Intake

Upon receipt of an application, the RSA Transition Specialist assigns a VR Specialist. Within five business days, the VR Specialist will contact the student and school to schedule an intake interview at a time when the student is available. Your school staff and the VR Specialist will work together to identify a private location at the school with access to technology, such as a Wi-Fi and a printer, and any additional documents that were not submitted with the application.

Major Activities:

- 1 VR Specialist reviews the student's assessments, discusses his/her strengths, interests, and abilities, and explains the RSA process.
- 2 Student actively participates, exercises informed choice, and signs a Client's Rights and Responsibilities form.
- 3 Student and VR Specialist develop a Next Steps sheet.

Eligibility

The VR Specialist uses existing information and assessments to determine eligibility. If additional assessments or evaluations are necessary, the VR Specialist will help the student get them. The VR Specialist will determine whether a disability substantially limits a student's ability to get a job and the impact of the disability on the student's *functional capacities*. All three factors are required for eligibility:

- ✓ There is a documented disability (e.g. IEP or 504 Plan).
- ✓ The disability substantially limits the student's ability to get a job.
- ✓ The student will benefit from services in order to reach an employment goal.

Eligibility determination can take up to 60 days from the date of receipt of application. The VR Specialist will notify the student and your school staff of the eligibility outcome. Progress updates will also be provided if there is a delay in determining eligibility.

If the DDS RSA determines that sufficient resources are not available to provide VR services to all eligible persons, the agency will institute an Order of Selection. The Order of Selection prioritizes eligible persons based on the significance of disability, which is based on functional capacities, not on a specific diagnosis or disability.

Functional Capacities

The VR Specialist assesses functional capacities in 7 key areas:

- Mobility
- Communication
- Self-Care
- Self-Direction
- Interpersonal Skills
- Work Tolerance
- Work Skills

Priority Categories for Order of Selection

- Category I: Most Significant Disability
- Category II: Significant Disability
- Category III: Non-Significant Disability



2 Explore What You Want To Be

After a student is determined as eligible for RSA services, the student will work individually with a VR Specialist to explore the world of work and identify strengths, interests, abilities, and career options.

Major Activities

- 1 Student completes a comprehensive assessment to identify interests, skill sets, and strengths.
- 2 Student and VR Specialist review IEP Transition Plan goals and other relevant school records for information about interests, skills, and abilities.
- 3 Student and VR Specialist research different types of jobs and job requirements.
- 4 Student participates in career exploration activities, (e.g. job fairs, informational interviews, job shadowing).



3 Develop Your Plan

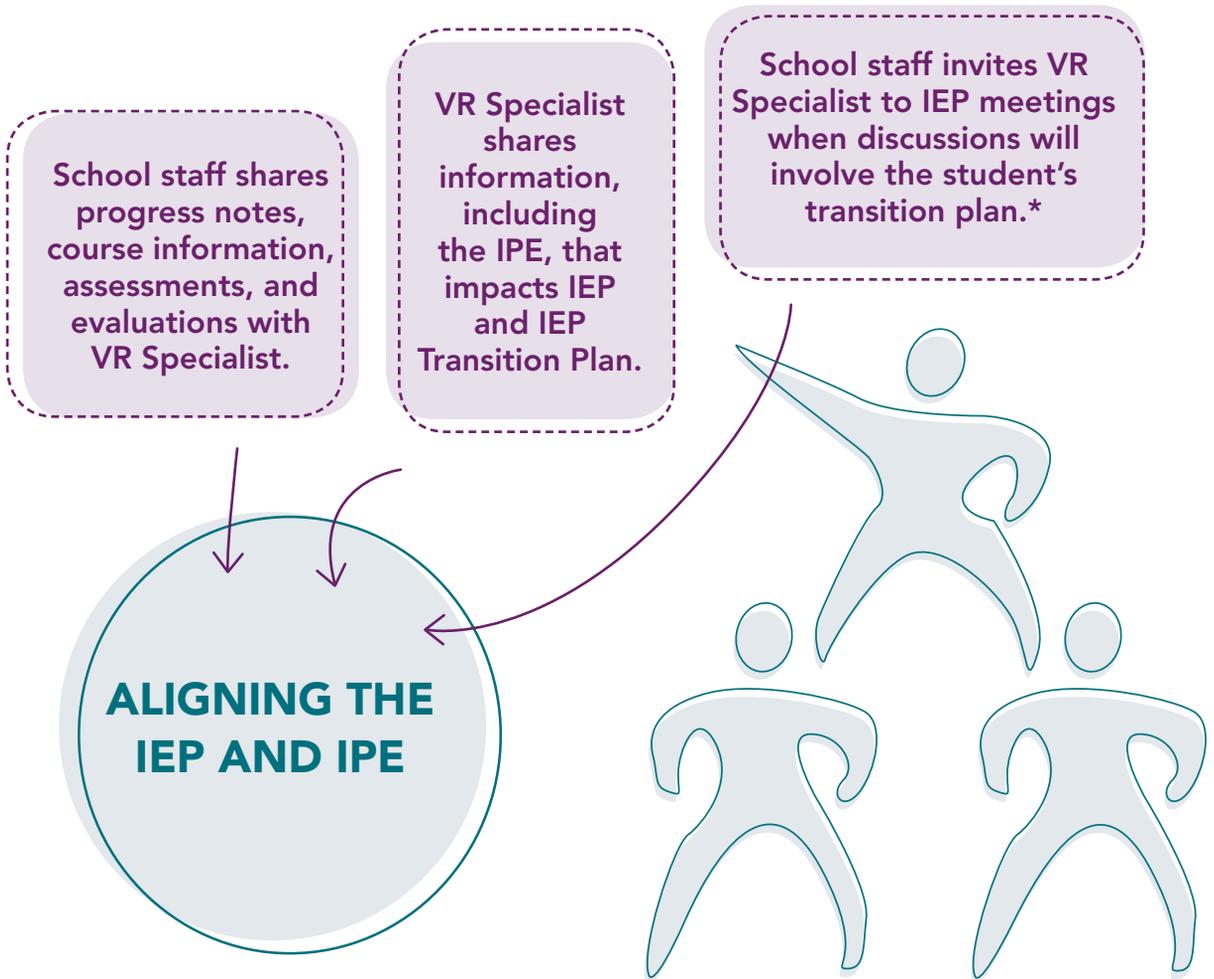
Together, the student and VR Specialist will have up to 90 days after the eligibility determination date to develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). The IPE is unique to the student and includes an employment goal, the supports and services needed to reach this goal, who will provide these services, and who will pay for these services. This plan is designed to support the student in obtaining a successful employment outcome.

Major Activities

- 1 Student works with the VR Specialist to identify an employment goal and to develop the IPE.
- 2 Student completes a financial needs assessment to determine the student's or parent's contribution to the cost of services.
- 3 Student and VR Specialist sign the IPE.

IPE and IEP Transition Plan

RSA wants to be involved in helping to plan the student's transition from school to employment. Information sharing between the student, RSA, and your school staff helps align the IPE with the IEP Transition Plan and ensures that the student is taking the right courses, participating in career exploration activities, and completing the necessary preparatory work that will support successful transition into employment.



*When should you invite the VR Specialist to an IEP meeting?

IDEA requires IEP Teams to invite RSA if RSA is likely to be responsible for providing or paying for any of the transition services included in a student's IEP (34 C.F.R. § 300.321(b)(3)).

To ensure that the goals in the IEP Transition Plan and IPE are consistent, you should invite the VR Specialist:

- After the student has been determined eligible and the IPE is developed,
- When there is a need to revise the transition plan or the IPE to ensure consistency between the two documents, and
- After receiving signed consent from student, and the legal guardian, if the student is under age 18.



4 Prepare for Employment

As the IPE is implemented, RSA and your school staff will work together to support the student in receiving services and participating in work experiences and will share student progress.

Major Activities

- 1 Student receives services to build the skill sets and earn credentials needed to achieve employment goal.
- 2 Student participates in career preparation activities at school and in the community.
- 3 Student regularly follows-up with VR Specialist to review progress.

Post-Secondary Education as a VR Service

Many students have questions about whether or not RSA will pay for college tuition. Based on a student's employment goal, the VR Specialist and student will decide if it is necessary for the student to attend a college or university.

If yes, the VR Specialist will provide a list of institutions that have the appropriate program to meet the employment goal. Public institutions within the DC metro area will be considered first. The student will exercise informed choice regarding which institution to attend.

The VR Specialist and your school staff will ensure the student has applied for comparable benefits (e.g. FAFSA, DC TAG).

Examples of VR Services

Services are individualized and based upon what the student needs to achieve the employment goal. Examples:

- Supported employment
- Independent living
- Career counseling & guidance
- Assistive technology devices
- Transportation allowances
- Work-related training & education

RSA may provide services while a student is still enrolled in high school, if the services are not available to the student under IDEA.





5 Search for Jobs & Get Hired

Student works with the VR Specialist and the RSA Business Relations Unit or external providers when they are ready to seek employment.

Major Activities

- 1 Student searches for job openings and submits applications and resumes.
- 2 Student provides regular updates to the VR Specialist to review progress and reports employment.
- 3 Student learns about post-employment services to help maintain employment.

Case Closure

RSA will consider a student as having a successful employment outcome and close the case when the outcome:

- matches his/her IPE goal,
- is consistent with strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, interests and informed choice,
- is in the most integrated setting possible,
- pays at or above minimum wage, and
- the student is employed for at least 90 days.

RSA will consider a student as having an *unsuccessful employment outcome* and close the case when:

- Student is non-responsive and does not cooperate.
- Student does not actively work towards achieving employment goal.
- Student's disability worsens and working is not possible.

If RSA determines that a student has an unsuccessful outcome, the student has the option to appeal.

Before a student's case is closed, the following occurs:

- The VR Specialist speaks to the student before closing the case to make sure there is a mutual agreement to end services.
- The student shares progress and additional needs with VR Specialist.
- The VR Specialist shares information with student about obtaining post-employment services, if he/she needs additional support to maintain a job.

Examples of Employment Services

Services are individualized and based upon the employment goal. Examples:

- Job development
- Job coaching
- Job placement

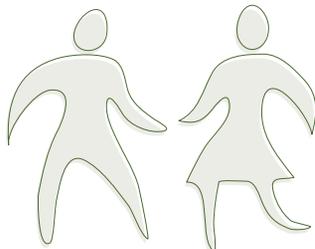
RSA may provide services while a student is still enrolled in high school, if the services are not available to the student under IDEA.



★★★ Your Role in the Vocational Rehabilitation Journey ★★★

What can your school do to prepare students for working with RSA to achieve employment?

- ✓ Encourage and empower students to be self-advocates and active and informed participants in the transition process.
- ✓ Work with students to develop soft skills.
- ✓ Stress the importance and value of work early on to your students.
 - Integrate career exploration into curriculum.
 - Expose students to the world of work via in-class lessons, individual dialogues, career fairs, etc.
- ✓ Connect students to employment experiences at school and in the community.
- ✓ Work with students to develop goals that match their interests and abilities.
- ✓ Support students in completing RSA applications and submit applications to the RSA Transition Specialist.
- ✓ Coordinate logistics with VR Specialist and prepare students for intake meetings.
- ✓ Communicate with VR Specialist to align the IPE and IEP Transition Plan.



STEP 1: OPEN YOUR CASE WITH DDS RSA

- **RSA Contact:** Communicate with the RSA Transition Specialist for questions concerning applications and with VR Specialist for questions concerning intake.
- **Your School's Role**
 - Identify and gather supporting documentation.
 - Submit applications.
 - Coordinate intake meetings.

STEP 2: EXPLORE WHAT YOU WANT TO BE

- **RSA Contact:** VR Specialist
- **Your School's Role**
 - Integrate career exploration into curriculum.
 - Work with students to explore preferences.
 - Connect students to career exploration activities at school and in community.

VR JOURNEY TIMELINE

RSA will determine eligibility within 60 days from receipt of a signed application.

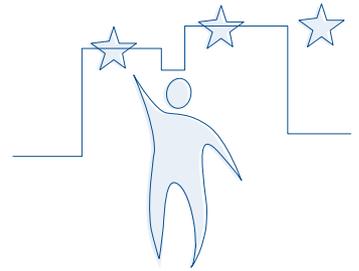
The IPE will be developed within 90 days

Informed Choice

Decisions will be made based on the student's informed choice and what is mutually agreed upon between the student and the VR Specialist throughout the VR process.

Communication

Although the RSA Transition Specialist serves as *your school's* point of contact for the applications and the VR Specialist serves as *your students'* main point of contact throughout the process, school staff may also contact an RSA VR Supervisor if questions or concerns arise about any students referred to RSA.



STEP 3: DEVELOP YOUR PLAN

- **RSA Contact:** VR Specialist
- **Your School's Role**
 - Share progress notes and results of assessments with VR Specialist.
 - Invite VR Specialist to IEP meeting when there is a need to revise the IEP Transition Plan.
 - Work with VR Specialist to align IPE and IEP Transition Plan.

STEP 4: PREPARE FOR EMPLOYMENT

- **RSA Contact:** VR Specialist
- **Your School's Role**
 - Share information that impacts the IPE with VR Specialist.
 - Support student in receiving services and participating in work experiences.
 - Prepare student for employment (self-determination & soft skills development).
 - Communicate student's progress to VR Specialist.

STEP 5: SEARCH FOR JOBS & GET HIRED

- **RSA Contact:** VR Specialist
- **Your School's Role**
 - Coordinate with VR Specialist to communicate student's progress.

after the date of eligibility.

Dependent on the individual services identified in the IPE.

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