

## Vocational Rehabilitation

### ***Q. What is Vocational Rehabilitation?***

**A.** Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is a federal/state program that helps people with disabilities to enter, maintain, or return to employment. Our charge is to help those people achieve and maintain meaningful careers.

### ***Q. Who is eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation Services?***

**A.** If you have a physical or mental impairment that makes it difficult for you to find or keep a job and you need our services to do so, you may be eligible. We will determine eligibility based on medical and/or psychological records, along with an assessment of how your disability affects your ability to work. A person who receives Social Security Disability Insurance benefits (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Insurance benefits (SSI) as a result of disability or blindness is presumed to be eligible, **if** that person intends to enter employment, but further diagnostic assessments may be required to determine if they will be able to receive services under the Order of Selection.

### ***Q. What kinds of services does the VR agency provide?***

**A.** Services are provided based on the person's abilities, interests, and informed choice and may include training, medical or psychological treatment that would increase the individual's ability to work, rehabilitation technology, job placement and follow-up, and post-employment services. All clients receive counseling and guidance as an integral part of their services to help the person reach his or her employment potential. Other areas of service may include maintenance and transportation, special emphasis programs, supported employment, transition services from school to work, personal care assistance program, independent living services, or client assistance program.

### ***Q. What if I want training or other services, but I don't want to go to work?***

**A.** All VR services are provided for the purpose of preparing a person to enter employment, return to employment, or maintain employment.

### ***Q. My VR counselor told me I am eligible for services, but can't receive those services because of the order of selection. What is an order of selection?***

**A.** Federal law states that if there is not enough funding available to provide services to all persons who are eligible, state VR programs must give first priority for services to applicants who have the most significant disabilities and limitations. Tennessee's VR program has funding to provide services only to those individuals who have the most significant disabilities and who are designated as "Priority Category 1". The priority categories are as follows:

Priority Category 1 - Eligible individuals who have the most significant disabilities

Priority Category 2 - Eligible individuals who have significant disabilities

Priority Category 3 - Eligible individuals who do not have a significant disability whose vocational rehabilitation is expected to require multiple services

Priority Category 4 - Eligible individuals who do not have a significant disability and who cannot be classified into a higher priority category

***Q. My VR counselor has informed me that my case is in Priority Category 3. What would qualify a person to be in Priority Category 1?***

**A.** VR must consider not only the disability (diagnosis), but also the limitations that the individual experiences, as a result of the disability, that would have an impact on the ability to enter or maintain employment. In order to be determined as having a most significant disability, an individual would have a severe disability that creates serious limitations in at least 2 of 7 capacity areas. These include **mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, interpersonal skills, work tolerance, or work skills**, as documented by medical, psychological, and/or vocational assessments. The individual must also require multiple vocational rehabilitation services that are expected to be needed over at least a 6-month time period. All services provided must be for the purpose of helping the client prepare for, retain, or maintain a successful employment outcome.

***Q. If I receive SSI or SSDI, do I automatically receive vocational rehabilitation services?***

**A.** A person who receives Social Security Disability Insurance benefits (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Insurance benefits (SSI) as a result of disability or blindness is presumed to be eligible and *at least* Priority Category 2, if he or she intends to enter employment. These VR clients are considered to have a serious limitation in work skills, and if they meet the requirements for one of the other limitations (mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, interpersonal skills, work tolerance), they will be in Priority Category 1. They do not have to meet the requirement of needing multiple services over at least a 6-month time period.

***Q. Are there any VR services that I can receive if I am in Priority Category 2, 3, or 4?***

**A.** VR cannot provide direct services to those eligible individuals who are not in Priority Category 1, but the VR counselor must provide information and referral services to help those persons find services through other agencies and entities.