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Consumer Handbook for Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Maine Bureau of Rehabilitation Services and Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Maine Department of Labor

Maine State Rehabilitation Council

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State of Maine Department of Labor
Bureau of Rehabilitation Services
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation



**Consumer Handbook for
Vocational Rehabilitation Services**
January 2013 Edition

Developed in conjunction with the
Maine State Rehabilitation Council



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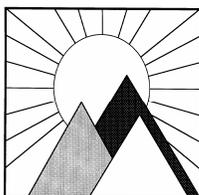


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Introduction

This handbook is designed to provide general information about the vocational rehabilitation program offered through the Maine Department of Labor, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). The purpose is to help you understand the program and have it work best for you.

The public vocational rehabilitation program is the result of a federal law, the Rehabilitation Act. This law is founded on the belief that all individuals with disabilities can work. Under this law, each state operates a program in partnership with the federal government. The cost is also shared by both the state and federal governments. The goal of the program is to assist individuals with significant disabilities to prepare for, find, and keep good jobs.

You may be referred to the program by any source in the community or you may contact the program directly yourself. There are offices throughout the state to serve you in your local community.

Before you make the decision to apply you may want to view DVR's captioned orientation video to learn more about vocational rehabilitation services. You can watch the video by going to www.maine.gov/rehab . Once you apply you will work primarily with a Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselor who will first determine your eligibility. This is generally a brief process but may sometimes require some examinations or tests for which DVR can pay. You may be invited to participate in DVR's Career Exploration Workshop to help you learn more about your individual strengths and interests. If you are determined eligible then you have many options to explore and decisions to make. The program requires that an Individualized Plan for Employment be developed which identifies your job goal and the services needed to achieve that goal. Your VR Counselor can provide information and assistance in developing the plan. The plan will also spell out your responsibilities and those of DVR. Once a plan is completed and both you and DVR agree with the plan, services can begin.

The plan can be changed over time, as long as both you and DVR agree to the changes.

The plan, the services, and the time needed will look different for every eligible individual. For some it may include job training or job coaching. For others it may include special devices such as a hearing aid or modifications to a vehicle. It depends on the job goal and the needs of each individual in reaching their goal.

DVR may pay for some of the services. They may also ask you to apply for other programs or benefits that can pay for some of the costs of your Individualized Plan for Employment. You will be encouraged to contribute to the cost of your plan in some way if you are able to do so. You will also be expected to meet your responsibilities in making the plan successful.

The goal of the DVR program is employment. If your Individualized Plan for Employment is successful, it will result in your obtaining and keeping a job that you can perform well and that you like. Generally DVR will work with you until you have been placed or retained on a job and all services have been completed. They will follow you on the job for at least 90 days and if the job is going well, your DVR case will be closed, but your case can be re-opened if you have a problem on the job. You will need to reapply for services if your case has been closed more than three (3) years.

The information that follows in this booklet is a more detailed description of the steps in the DVR process and more detail about specific services that are available. Please feel free to contact any staff member of DVR if you have any questions or need further information about services or policy.

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1-800-698-4440 – Toll-free within Maine

WILL I BE ELIGIBLE FOR DVR SERVICES?

Once you've made the decision to apply for services with the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (DVR), the next step is to work closely with

your VR Counselor to determine your eligibility. In general, people are eligible for services if they have a significant impairment that impedes their ability to work, and if they require vocational rehabilitation services to attain or maintain employment.

The eligibility decision may be immediate if you are receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and you plan to go to work. If you are not currently receiving Social Security benefits, it may take as long as several weeks to determine your eligibility if information concerning your disability must be secured from other sources such as your doctor.

In addition to basic eligibility, DVR currently has a policy that gives priority to persons with more significant disabilities. This is called the Order of Selection. The Order of Selection is necessary when demand for services exceed the agency's resources.

Sometimes it may be necessary for the DVR to arrange for medical tests or other assessments to determine your eligibility or priority under the Order of Selection. This would be at no cost to you. You will be fully informed throughout each step of the process and you are encouraged to be involved in how these assessments are done, including the selection of providers for these evaluations.

Examples of some types of DVR assessments include:

- collecting information about your history and any records that document your disability;
- trial work experience / job testing;
- psychological assessment
- medical evaluations
- talking with you to determine how your disability may impact employment
- other evaluations that are determined to be necessary by you and your VR Counselor

Our goal is to make your eligibility determination as quickly as possible with the minimum amount of tests and paperwork. The law requires that this process be completed in no more than 60 days. If there is need to exceed 60 days because of insufficient information, we will ask you to sign an agreement to extend the period for eligibility determination.

INFORMED CONSUMER CHOICE

Informed Consumer Choice is a concept that should guide all decision-making that occurs throughout your experience with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR). The Rehabilitation Act says that you are an equal partner in all decisions made concerning:

- Your assessment
- Your employment goal
- Vocational Rehabilitation services
- The choice of service providers
- Ways of obtaining Vocational Rehabilitation services

Informed Choice also means that you are made aware of all the information and options available with regard to your rehabilitation. If you need help understanding these options or support in carrying out these functions, you may ask your VR Counselor, a person you know or an Advocate from the Client Assistance Program (CAP).

With choice comes responsibility. It is important for you to work together with your VR Counselor and others who are assisting you to reach your employment goal. Choice is not demanding what you want. There are factors that influence choices such as: your abilities and capabilities; available financial resources; job market; legal and safety issues; cost effectiveness; etc. Therefore, it is very important for you and your VR Counselor to explore realistic options and create opportunities that lead to meaningful employment outcomes.

Informed Consumer Choice is the cornerstone of your experience with VR. Discuss this partnership often with your VR Counselor.

HOW DO I MAKE A GOOD CAREER CHOICE?

Making a career choice involves matching your abilities, interests, values and personality with the demands of the real world of work. This is an active process consisting of activities designed to help you pick a job goal. Your VR Counselor is available to help you with this process.

Four Steps in Choosing a Career:

1. Knowing Yourself

The process begins with a detailed exploration of yourself. What motivates you? What are your interests? What are you good at?

What is your personality? What disability-related issues impact your career choice? Where do you want to live and work? This can be done through a variety of ways, including self-assessment, in-depth counseling interviews with your VR Counselor, interest or ability tests, job shadowing and career groups.

As part of this process, your counselor may refer you to the Career Exploration Workshop (CEW) which is held at the CareerCenter and facilitated by DVR staff. The workshop covers areas such as expectations about work, your readiness for work, tools to evaluate your interests and skills, tools for finding work, and working with your VR Counselor.

2. Occupational and Educational Information Gathering

Because occupational and educational information is always changing, it is important that you gather information about the world of work, and determine where you best fit. Your VR Counselor can help you with this process. There are a number of resources available to you for career information through the Maine Department of Labor's CareerCenters and the internet. There are also vocational activities that may help with this step, such as visiting a job site and observing people doing the job in which you're interested or trying out the job yourself for a short period of time.

In addition, talking to employers or other people in the field in which you are interested is an excellent way to learn more about the career(s) you are considering. Your VR Counselor may also have some of this information from talking to employers. The more of this type of information you can gather, the better your career decision is likely to be. In developing your Individualized Plan for Employment, it will be helpful to share any of the information you have gathered with your VR Counselor.

Situational Assessment- If you do not know the kind of work you want to do, or if your VR Counselor is unsure about how VR can assist you, your counselor may first set up a trial work experience for you.

If your employment interests require formal education and training, and there are some questions around the appropriateness of such training, your counselor may develop a trial educational evaluation. This is where you would have the opportunity to attempt limited training as part of your evaluation.

3. Career Decision Making - Finding the Right Match

Once you have gone through a good self-assessment process and completed the occupational information phase, you are ready to make a sound decision about matching your skills, abilities, values and personality with the demands of your chosen occupation. By using a situational assessment, you and your counselor can determine if a type of work is a good match for you, something for which you have the aptitudes and enjoy doing. The information gathered will be used in any further work you and VR do together. Additionally, your VR Counselor can help you assess the physical or mental demands required and potential reasonable accommodations you might need to be successful.

4. Planning a Course of Action

Developing a DVR Individualized Plan for Employment with a focused employment goal which details the services and supports you will need to reach your goal is one good way of planning a course of action. Your VR Counselor is available to help in developing this plan.

HOW DO I DEVELOP AN EFFECTIVE AND MEANINGFUL INDIVIDUALIZED PLAN FOR EMPLOYMENT?

What is an Individualized Plan for Employment?

An Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) is a written document that you and your VR Counselor have agreed to that describes a realistic goal for you, and a plan for how you will reach that goal. It is the outcome of analyzing such things as your local labor market, previous work experience, how your disability impacts on your ability to work and the type of job in which you are interested and can be successful. The plan outlines how you will achieve employment with the assistance of vocational rehabilitation services. The plan may be very simple and quick or it may require considerable time and care to develop. This will depend on your particular circumstances. It will take into consideration your unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, interests and informed choice.

How and when is the Individualized Plan for Employment developed?

Once it has been determined that you are eligible to receive vocational rehabilitation services, you may begin to develop your Individualized Plan for Employment. The goal and services required in the plan are based on your input. It is also based on the information that you or others provide regarding your abilities and interests. You are welcome to involve any individuals of your choosing in this process. These may include family, friends, and members of your support network, advocates, or experts outside of the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services.

You can work on your plan development in any combination of the following ways:

- You can work directly with a VR Counselor.
- You can work on your own or with support from any of the resources noted above. DVR can help you with information or guidance as you request. We will act as your consultant.

Regardless of which option you use, there must be agreement between you & your VR Counselor before any plan is implemented.

In addition to information provided in this handbook, DVR has many books and resource information in each location that can help you to develop a meaningful plan. Talk to your VR Counselor for help finding them.

How do I develop an Individualized Plan for Employment that is right for me?

DVR has an Individualized Plan for Employment form that must be completed, and your VR Counselor will provide you with a copy of that form. What is even more important, however, is the thought and planning that is done in preparation for writing the plan..

There are basically two steps to developing this plan: deciding on an employment goal and how you will reach that goal. Under the DVR program, plans are developed based on your unique needs, taking your choices into consideration. Our job is to help you to be informed about your choices.

This means that you understand not only what you want, but also what the alternatives are and what the consequences are of making certain choices. There are also some rules that DVR must follow.

Deciding on an employment goal

There are many things you need to consider when deciding on an employment goal. First, what work experience and skills do you currently have? What type of job best fits you as a person, taking into consideration such things as your abilities, capabilities, and interests? Next look at the job itself. Some of the questions to think about are: Is this a job where there are many opportunities for employment? Where are the potential employers located and will transportation be an issue?

What opportunities will there be in the future for you in this field? What will this job pay, and does that meet your needs? Is there flexibility in working conditions? Another thing to think about is what it will take to reach the goal. What resources will you need to reach the goal? If the goal will require a lot of preparation time, can you afford to be unemployed for an extended period of time while you prepare for the goal?

Your VR Counselor can help you look for an employment goal that is right for you. Your VR Counselor has information about different careers, may know other people or activities that can help you to get more information, and can help guide you through the process of making a decision. You may also choose to involve individuals outside of DVR in the development of your employment goal.

For additional information on choosing a job goal, see the section of this handbook called, ["How Do I Make a Good Career Choice?"](#)

Developing a plan for reaching the goal

Your Individualized Plan for Employment will describe the services that you will need in order to reach your goal, the time frames, and estimated costs for the goal and services and the responsibilities of everyone involved in your plan.

The services that are included in this plan should be only those that are necessary to achieve your employment goal. Things you should consider include: What will you need to reach the goal? How long will it take you to achieve this goal? What is the most efficient way of getting to the goal, both in terms of time and costs? Who are the potential providers of services, and which one will be best for you? Will you have any problems in accessing the services you need (due to such things as transportation, disability-related issues, etc.)?

Your VR Counselor can assist you with the process of developing an appropriate plan of services.

Your VR Counselor will be able to help you find out what services you may need to reach your goal and can tell you what DVR rules apply. For most services, your VR Counselor will have information regarding who can provide the services you need. DVR encourages you to talk with the service providers and get more information from them before deciding which one to choose. You may also choose to involve any individuals or sources outside of DVR in the development of your Individualized Plan for Employment.

Once you and your VR Counselor have agreed on your job goal and the services you require to achieve that goal, your plan can be written, signed by you and your VR Counselor, and services may

begin. You will receive a copy of the IPE and any amendments made to the plan.

How will DVR decide whether or not to approve my plan?

DVR will look at a number of factors with you in deciding whether or not to approve your plan. The major things that DVR will consider are:

- Is the plan consistent with your strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice?
- Are the services requested essential toward reaching your goal?
- How will the plan be monitored to ensure a successful outcome?
- Are the time frames realistic toward reaching your goal?
- Have other sources of funding been explored, when appropriate?
- Are the sources of payment identified in the plan?
- Is the service being provided in the most cost effective manner?
- Are treatments or interventions that you need to be successful addressed in the plan?
- Are the services consistent with DVR regulations and policies?

What happens if I want to change my program or if I need more services?

It is important that you contact your VR Counselor immediately to discuss any changes in your program. When changes are agreed upon, the Plan will be amended. You and your counselor will review and update your plan at least once a year, even if there are no major changes.

What if I have questions or concerns about my Individualized Plan for Employment?

Your VR Counselor is the key person you can go to for answers. The provision of any particular service is based on individual needs. If your counselor cannot answer your questions to your satisfaction, you should request to speak to a DVR supervisor. If you still disagree with DVR, there are other procedures that may help. For more information about this, see the section of this book called, [“What Do I Do If I Disagree with VR?”](#)

Who will pay for the services I need?

Each person's Individualized Plan for Employment is different. It describes the employment goal, the services needed to reach that goal, and the agreement between you and DVR. Many resources may be used to cover the costs of services under the Individualized Plan for Employment, including your resources, your family's, your insurance or benefits, other public programs and/or DVR. Each Individualized Plan for Employment should carefully spell out who is responsible to pay for what services.

- You will be asked to voluntarily contribute resources toward the cost of your Individualized Plan for Employment. Examples of how you might contribute resources include paying a vendor for a portion of the cost of the services you need or getting some of the services on your own. DVR strongly believes that the personal investment of each individual is an important ingredient in making the Individualized Plan for Employment meaningful and successful. You are not, however, required to provide a contribution and your plan cannot be held up if you are not able to contribute.
- Before DVR funds can be used, it is required by law to determine if there are other resources (such as other agencies, your health insurance, financial aid for post-secondary education, employee benefits) that will pay for the services you need. You may be required to apply for these other resources. DVR will also use any other resources that are readily available toward the costs of your Individualized Plan for Employment.
- DVR may pay for services or goods that are not available from other sources and that are agreed upon in your Individualized Plan for Employment. These goods and services must be purchased in a way that agrees with state and Bureau purchasing policies and terms. DVR is only able to use service providers who agree with these policies and terms.
- You can choose services that DVR could secure more cost effectively elsewhere, but you may have to pay the difference.
- Some individuals who receive SSI and or SSDI may be eligible for the Ticket to Work program. The Social Security Administration

provides funding to DVR when ticket holders achieve earnings at a substantial wage.

If you have any questions about who is paying for services in your Individualized Plan for Employment, please ask your VR Counselor. It is important that you know who is paying and what the costs are for services and goods in your Individualized Plan for Employment. This knowledge will help you make better decisions about the services that you receive.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO MY BENEFITS IF I GO TO WORK?

If you receive disability based cash or medical benefits (such as Social Security Disability Insurance, Supplemental Security Income, State Supplement, Medicare and/or Medicaid), there are rules for which you may qualify which would allow you to try work and still receive benefits. It is important that you get accurate information, so that you can make good decisions about your vocational goals, your potential earnings and your health insurance needs BEFORE you embark on an employment plan.

Social Security Has a Number of Work Incentives That Allow You to Work and Still Receive Benefits. Here Are Just Some Examples.

Did You Know?

If you receive Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits

- You can go to work for a Trial Work Period and still receive your benefits. After that Trial Work Period is over, Social Security will decide if you are earning enough to end your benefits.
- There are situations where you can earn over what is called 'substantial gainful activity' after your Trial Work Period and continue to receive your full monthly benefit amount.
- Even if you go off SSDI due to earnings for an extended period of time, SSDI benefits can be reactivated, if you cannot work and Medicare can continue for an extended period of time.

If you receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

- If you go to work, your check will be reduced depending on your earnings. Social Security counts less than half of your earnings when figuring how much SSI you would receive.

If you have a disability and receive Title XIX (Medicaid)

- For SSI or State Supplement recipients: If you lose your cash benefits due to earnings, you can continue to be insured by Medicaid, until your earnings exceed a yearly limit.
- Recent increases in allowable earned income limits may make it possible for you to have substantial earnings and maintain Medicaid eligibility. You may have to pay a monthly premium,

based on your annual income (and your spouse's income, if you are married).

- If Social Security determines that your impairment has improved but you still have an impairment, which is determined medically to be severe, you may be able to keep your Medicaid benefits as long as you continue to work.

How do I get the information that I need on benefits so that I can make good vocational choices?

Each person's benefits are unique. The work incentives apply to each person based on their individual circumstances. The best way to get accurate information on work and how it will affect your benefits is to contact the source of benefits, i.e. the Department of Health and Human Services; the Social Security Administration; Maine State Housing; or contact a Benefits Specialist who has extensive training in work incentives and many other benefits programs.

You may ask your VR Counselor to set-up an appointment with a Benefits Specialist for you or you can call:

Maine Medical Center
207-662-4900 (TTY) or
Toll Free (888) 208-8700
<http://www.benefitsandworkinme.org>

WHAT CAN I DO TO MAKE THE DVR PROGRAM WORK FOR ME?

While going through the DVR program may take time or may be confusing, there are things you can do to make it easier. You and your VR Counselor are partners and your active participation will help to speed up the process and achieve your goal more quickly. Here is a list of suggestions:

- Take responsibility for your program. You determine your future. Your VR Counselor is there to assist and guide you, but there will be things you need to accomplish for yourself.
- Think about your employment interests prior to meeting with your VR Counselor. Carefully think about what are your likes, dislikes, strengths and weaknesses. Consider long-term career goals and how you can achieve them. Having ideas to discuss with your VR Counselor can help you get to know each other. Programs that are well thought out are much more likely to succeed.
- Participate in the Career Exploration Workshop. (CEW). The CEW can be a great way to help you uncover skills and talents that are unique to you.
- Keep scheduled appointments. Missing appointments may delay your program. If you must cancel, call ahead of time to reschedule.
- Ask if you should bring anything to your appointments. When possible, obtain medical or educational records that will be needed by DVR. Your VR Counselor will tell you what is necessary to determine your eligibility or to do an Individualized Plan for Employment.
- Record important information or ask that it be put in writing for you. Keep your own DVR file with all the papers you receive.
- Plan ahead when making vocational or educational plans. You may be disappointed if you wait until the last minute before applying for services or contacting your VR Counselor
- Keep in touch with your VR Counselor. You don't have to wait for a call. If the VR Counselor is not available, leave your name and where and when you can be reached.
- Ask questions. The DVR program may be confusing and your VR Counselor can provide answers. For additional advice or

assistance, you may call the Client Assistance Program (CAP) at (207)-377-7055 or 1-800-773-7055 Voice/ TTY - or Use Maine Relay at 711.

- DVR has a State Rehabilitation Council, whose membership is appointed by the Governor, which meets to provide direction and to recommend policy for the agency. If you would like to contact a council member, please contact the Chair of the Committee. Their information is available at <http://www.mainesrc.org/home/>

WHAT DO I DO IF I DISAGREE WITH DVR?

If you disagree with a decision that DVR makes concerning you, there are several options to resolve the disagreement. Below is a description of some of those options, which are designed to help you and DVR move forward in planning for your vocational rehabilitation.

Discuss the issue with DVR

If you have a disagreement, DVR encourages you to first discuss your concerns with your VR Counselor. This is potentially the fastest and most simple way of resolving any differences. If you are not able to resolve your differences by talking with your VR Counselor, you may want to discuss the issue with another DVR representative, such as the supervisor, regional manager or a DVR central office manager. The local DVR office can give you information on how to contact any of these individuals and in some instances change your VR Counselor.

Contact the Client Assistance Program (CAP)

The Client Assistance Program is operated by CARES Inc. CAP provides information, advice, advocacy and, if determined necessary, legal representation to persons who have concerns about the rehabilitation services they receive from DVR. The CAP is required to use informal means, i.e. negotiation, in resolving conflicts, to the maximum extent possible, before resorting to formal or legal means i.e. Mediation or Due Process Hearing. Each case is unique and in some instances it may be determined that the only way to resolve a dispute is to go straight to Mediation and Due Process Hearing.

You have the right to request any means of resolving a disagreement within thirty (30) days of the dispute, with or without assistance from the CAP. All advice and discussions with CAP are confidential and will not affect your services adversely.

CARES, Inc.
134 Main St., Suite 2C
207-377-7055 or toll-free at 1-800-773-7055 for voice /TTY
Or Maine relay by dialing 711
Fax number 207-377-7057
www.caresinc.org

Dispute Resolution Procedures:

Negotiation

Negotiation usually involves helping with communication between you and your VR Counselor or discussing different ways of overcoming disagreements. Negotiation is often the quickest way to resolve a problem.

Mediation

Mediation is a voluntary informal dispute resolution process in which the mediator, who is not a DVR employee, helps you and DVR to reach an agreement. The mediator has no power to make a decision for you or DVR. If you come to an agreement with DVR, the agreement would be put in writing and signed by you and DVR. You will receive a copy of this agreement. This type of dispute resolution may be provided only if both you and DVR agree to be involved with Mediation.

Due Process Hearing

In a Due Process Hearing, you would present the information you are disputing to a hearing officer, who is not an employee of DVR. The process is much more formal and the information presented by both you and DVR is generally more involved than in Mediation. In a Due Process Hearing, both you and DVR are usually represented by advocates or attorneys and may call witnesses. The process of scheduling, conducting the hearing and the making the decision by the hearing officer generally takes much longer than for an Informal Review. If you disagree with the hearing officer's decision, you may appeal the decision further through the court system.

Requesting a Due Process Hearing or Mediation

Requests for Mediation and Due Process Hearings must be in writing and sent to the DVR Director. The addresses for the DVR central office can be found at the end of this booklet. If you decide that you want to go through one of these procedures, DVR must receive your request within thirty (30) days after DVR informs you of the decision with which you disagree.

In any of these procedures, you have a right to bring a representative (for example, a CAP advocate, an attorney, a family member, etc.). However, DVR would not be responsible for the costs of your bringing a representative (such as the fees charged by a private attorney).

DVR SERVICES (OVERVIEW)

The vocational rehabilitation program offers a wide range of services to individuals who are eligible. The plan for services is developed based on the individual needs of each person that DVR serves. Therefore, the services provided to one person may be very different than those provided for another.

As a general rule, in order for DVR to provide a service:

You must require the service in order for you to succeed in achieving your employment goal;

and

The service must be unavailable to you through other resources.

The following is a listing of the types of services that DVR may provide, if needed as part of your Individualized Plan for Employment. Throughout this booklet you will find more information on the topics below. You are encouraged to ask your VR Counselor or other DVR staff if you have questions about the availability or need for any particular service.

- Assessment services to determine eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs. Depending on your situation, this may include such things as opportunities to simply look at actual work sites, work at a job on a trial basis, medical or psychological tests, or other ways to learn more about your disability and vocational rehabilitation needs.
- Counseling, guidance, and information about career and employment decisions
- Referral to other service providers for services not available through this program
- Job placement services
- Employment training and other training services
- Physical and mental restoration services

- Self-employment services, including technical assistance and consultation for the establishment of small business operations, as well as
- Occupational licenses, tools, equipment, and initial stocks and supplies
- Rehabilitation technology
- Transition planning from school to work
- Job coaching and supported employment services
- Support Services may also be delivered to support the above-mentioned primary services. Some examples of support services are:
 - Services to family members, if needed for the individual with a disability to achieve the employment goal
 - Expenses for additional costs incurred while participating in a DVR evaluation or an Individualized Plan for Employment
 - Transportation services
 - Personal assistance services. These are services needed by an individual to assist in performing daily living activities as a result of the disability, which are necessary in order for the individual to achieve the employment goal.
 - Interpreter or reader services
 - Post-employment services to assist individuals to keep their job, to get a job in the same or related field, or to advance in their job

SITUATIONAL ASSESSMENT

What is a Situational Assessment?

A Situational Assessment is an opportunity for you to try one or more real jobs, to see how those jobs match your interests and abilities. The choice of jobs will be based on your interests, abilities, and needs. Assessments may vary in length depending on your particular situation, but usually last for 40 hours over a two-week period. You may be paid for the work you do during the assessment, usually at the minimum wage.

Most of the time during the assessment, an evaluator will be with you, to see how you do on the job. He or she will look at many aspects of your job performance, such as your work skills, behaviors, relationships with the boss and co-workers, attendance, and work tolerance. From participating, you will have the chance to see how you like the job and how good you are at it. An assessment may be set up with an employer who has a job opening, and if they are satisfied with your work, you may be offered a job. After the assessment is finished, you and your counselor will get a report from the evaluator telling how you did, whether the job seems suitable for you, and whether you will need other services to be successful.

What is important for me to know and do?

When it is agreed that you need a Situational Assessment, your VR Counselor can help you select a community agency that can set up the assessment that will best meet your needs. Before the assessment begins, you need to be involved with the decision about the type of job you will do during the assessment. It is important that you let your VR Counselor and the evaluator know about anything that will help them find the right place to do the assessment.

You need to let them know about your interests and abilities, as well as any concerns or preferences you may have about your work schedule, transportation, pay requirements, government benefits you may receive, disability-related needs, work environment, location of the job, or any other information that will help in finding an assessment site that will best suit you. If you know of particular

places where you would like to work, share this with DVR and the evaluator.

Before and during the assessment, it is important for you to understand what is expected of you. Good attendance at planning meetings and at work, arriving on time, proper clothing and getting along with the boss and co-workers will always be important. In addition, the particular job where you are assessed will probably have other requirements that you will need to know.

Finally, it is important for you to ask any questions that you may have and to provide feedback during the process.

JOB PLACEMENT SERVICES

What Are Job Placement Services?

When you and your VR Counselor decide that you are ready to find a job, your VR Counselor will work with you to find employment or arrange for other services, if necessary to help you get a job.

Looking for work requires serious effort. To be successful in finding the job you want, it will be important for you to do your part. The more job-hunting you do, the better your chances of finding work. Some things you can do are to ask family and friends whether they know of any job openings; register for the Maine Job Bank, a service of the Department of Labor's CareerCenter; check the "Help Wanted" section of the newspaper; and review job search websites. For more ideas, please go to <http://www.employmentforme.org/job-seekers/employment.html>.

There are a number of services that DVR may provide to assist you with placement, depending on your needs. These services may be provided directly by DVR staff or through other agencies.

- Job Seeking Skills (JSS) - JSS provides assistance with interviewing skills; resume writing and application techniques to help you prepare for your job search. JSS may be individual assistance or provided as part of a class.
- Individual Placement Assistance - Your VR Counselor or another agency may help you identify local employers who might have job openings in your area of interest or advise you on interviewing and resume writing. If needed, arrangements can be made for someone to accompany you to interviews.
- Job Clubs - Job clubs are group sessions, which provide information on current local job openings, follow-up with employers, and ongoing support.
- Situational Assessment- A situational assessment is an opportunity for you to try out a real job to determine if you are suited to a particular type of work. A job coach, who assists you in learning the job and to observe your performance, accompanies you. The employer may offer you a job if you perform well during the assessment.

- Career Exploration Workshop (CEW) - The Career Exploration Workshop (CEW) is a class where you will explore employment areas you're interested in, as well as uncover skills and talents that are unique to you. The workshop is often held at a local CareerCenter, school, or partner agency. It may be facilitated by DVR staff or in conjunction with others. While the CEW typically is offered as a 5-day class over two weeks, it may be delivered differently for students and others as needed. The workshop covers areas such as expectations about work, your readiness for work, tools to evaluate your interests and skills, tools for finding work, and working with your VR Counselor.
- On- the- Job Training - An On- the-Job Training (OJT) is an arrangement between an employer and DVR where the employer agrees to hire an individual, and train them while DVR assists with the initial costs of the training and support.

Can DVR continue to provide assistance after I'm working?

Your VR Counselor will maintain contact with you during your first ninety (90) days on the job, or longer if necessary to make sure your job is satisfactory. With your permission, your VR Counselor may contact your supervisor to discuss your progress on the job.

- DVR can provide technical assistance to you and your employer to identify ways to modify the job site so you can perform better. This may include special equipment or rearranging the work site.
- DVR can provide post-employment services that assist you in retaining the job or finding another job in the same or related field, or to advance in your field. Post-employment services are limited to one or two services over a period of less than six (6) months. If there has been a change in your circumstances or your disability has changed you will need to reapply for Vocational Rehabilitation Services. If it has been more than three (3) years since your case was closed, you will need to reapply for services.

JOB COACHING AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

What is job coaching?

A Job Coach (or Employment Specialist) is a person who provides the support you need to keep a job in the community. You may need the Job Coach only for a limited period of time, or you may need support from a Job Coach on an ongoing basis.

Some examples of how a Job Coach might support you are: helping you learn the skills needed for the job; helping you work with supervisors and co-workers; helping you learn how to use transportation for going to work; helping you to know what is expected of you on the job; providing assistance if the work becomes too difficult for you or if other problems arise that affect your work. Sometimes the Job Coach may work with your employer to teach him/her how to provide support to you. A Job Coach will usually meet with you at work, but may meet with you off the job, if that is appropriate and more comfortable for you.

What is supported employment?

Supported employment is a regular job in the community with the ongoing supports (usually job coaching) to help you keep the job. It is designed for persons who, because of a significant disability, are expected to need supports for as long as they remain employed. The amount of support you would receive on a daily or weekly basis will depend on your particular needs. DVR is able to provide these services only on a time-limited basis. Because people who are in supported employment will need long-term supports, plans must be made for who will provide the job coaching or other supports after DVR services are finished. In fact, the law requires that these plans be made before someone starts in supported employment.

Therefore, it is very important that you work with your counselor to apply for other services that may be available to provide the ongoing support after the DVR services are completed. Examples of resources that may be available to provide these ongoing supports are: natural supports from an employer; family support; the Department of Health & Human Services; Social Security Impairment-Related Work Expenses; and DVR's Basic and Brain Injury Extended Support Funds.

What is Transitional Employment?

Transitional Employment is a model of supported employment designed for individuals who have severe psychiatric disabilities. A community rehabilitation provider or clubhouse promises the employer that the job will get done and operates the job site. The advantages of this approach are that you could get into a job setting and get experience without the pressures of the formal job seeking process. You have the opportunity of earning income at the prevailing wage for the particular job. You experience success by simply trying the job and, if for some reason you cannot continue, someone else works at the jobsite, you have the support of the clubhouse and will be offered other opportunities when you are ready. This hopefully limits the feelings of 'failure'. You may also have the opportunity to try a number of different jobs. This builds your job history, provides a source of work references and builds your confidence, while offering the safety net and other support services through the clubhouse program. When you complete six months on one Transitional Employment site you most likely will go on to work at another site. The Transitional Employment option is not the same as a permanent job, but it is an excellent skill building opportunity that can lead toward successful employment. Many who have used the Transitional Employment process have found that a series of such placements in different workplaces, doing different jobs, with different people, is very helpful in gaining the confidence and references necessary to secure independent employment. Success with Transitional Employment puts you in an excellent position to pursue longer-term job and career choices.

What else is important for me to know?

Job coaching and supported employment should be designed to meet your individual needs for keeping your job. The way DVR can set up job coaching is quite flexible. Some people may need more or different kinds of support than others. Some people work better with certain Job Coaches than others. It is important that you let your VR Counselor know if you have specific needs in the amount or type of services that you receive. If you have any problems or concerns in working with your Job Coach, you should inform the VR Counselor.

SELF-EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

What is self-employment?

Self-employment is a type of work where you own and operate your own business. It may be a business that you operate out of your home. It may also be called a small business enterprise or a micro-business enterprise.

Do I qualify for self-employment services?

If your employment goal can be best reached through self employment, DVR may be able to assist you with establishing or maintaining the business.

In general, setting up your own business will require a significant commitment of your time and resources to be successful. The Division may be able to help you in the development of self-employment or a small business enterprise under the following conditions:

- You will be required to attend a self-employment orientation program.
- You must develop a Business Plan and it must be approved by an Approved Business Consultant, like the Maine Small Business Development Center (SBDC), as an economically viable proposal. An alternate small business resource acceptable to both you and your VR Counselor may be used instead of the SBDC. If you need additional assistance, there are numerous Small Business Development Counseling Centers offering ongoing consultation and workshops. Your VR Counselor will assist you with these connections.
- Prior to providing services under an Individualized Plan for Employment through a goal of self-employment, the Division must agree to both the goal and the business plan. It will be important for you and your counselor to discuss how you will decide whether the business is successful.
- The DVR typically limits its contribution toward establishing a small business (excluding training and disability related expenses) to \$7,500.00 for a business that will allow you to become completely

self-sufficient or \$2,500.00 that will allow you to work part time and continue to receive benefits such as SSI or SSDI.

- You will be expected to seek outside financing for the start up costs of your business and you must contribute to your business in cash, in-kind labor, and/ or materials.
- You will be expected to own and operate at least 51% of the business.
- Self-employment services provided by DVR are limited to start-up services and goods. Examples might include business consultants, bookkeeping, advertising, initial stock, insurance, permits, fees, equipment supplies, rent, utilities, transportation, telephone and postage.
- An Important Note: Self-employment plans that are expected to result in your becoming self-sufficient (able to get off of all public benefits) require that you have a **good credit record**, or a pattern of managing your debt well.

Once the small business enterprise is operating:

Your VR Counselor will visit the business site and/or be in contact with you to see how the business is going. Before DVR closes your case with the agency, you and your VR Counselor will need to decide whether you still agree that the business is or will be successful. To help you be successful the recommended time-period for follow up of people on self-employment plans is two (2) years.

TRANSPORTATION SUPPORTS

'Support Service'

Talk with your VR Counselor about whether transportation supports are necessary for your Individualized Plan for Employment.

- There is information about car maintenance available from your VR Counselor that will help you to minimize the need for repairs and there is a process for obtaining assistance with repairs that includes determining the value of your car and consulting a certified mechanic. Ask your VR Counselor if you have any questions.
- There is a worksheet that you can fill out with your counselor to help you decide if you can afford the upkeep of a vehicle. There are guidelines to help you and your counselor decide if transportation assistance is necessary for your IPE and if there are any other available funds to help you in obtaining a vehicle.
- It is possible to obtain assistance in purchasing a vehicle, following MPower guidelines. For more information, about transportation services talk with your VR Counselor.

POST-EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

What are Post-Employment Services?

Post-employment services may be provided to you after your case has been closed, to help you maintain, regain or advance in your current job, or find another job in the same or related field. It is important for you to know that post employment services are limited to one or two services that will take less than six months to complete and will require you to amend your Individualized Plan for Employment with your VR Counselor.

When am I eligible for Post-Employment Services?

If you have received services from DVR and your case has been closed because you were working, you might be eligible. If you find you are having trouble with your job, are unable to advance in your job, or have lost your job, and you think it is because of your disability, you should contact your VR Counselor to inquire about post-employment services.

Will I have to go through exams or tests again?

Generally, no. You are still considered eligible to receive services from DVR based on the information already in your case record. That information can usually be used to determine what services you need.

However, if your disability has changed, or if your circumstances and job goals have significantly changed, you may need to reapply for services. If you will need more than one or two services that will take more than six (6) months to complete or it has been more than three (3) years since your case was closed, you will need to reapply for services. At that time, additional exams or tests may be necessary.

Education and Training Services

EMPLOYMENT TRAINING

What Is Employment Training?

It is the means by which a person learns the skills needed to do a particular job or type of work. Examples include:

- job tryouts (situational assessments)
- on-the-job training
- short-term specific skill training
- internships
- volunteer work
- vocational/technical school
- college training

Can DVR Help with Employment Training?

DVR may help, if training is needed for you to achieve your job goal, and if DVR has agreed to help you with this as part of your Individualized Plan for Employment. The type of training DVR will support depends on your abilities and interests, information about the job market, and research on how most people get into the kind of work you want to do.

What Is Expected of Me?

- You and your VR Counselor must agree on your employment goal and whether training is needed to achieve it.
- You need to apply and be accepted for admission into the training program or school you wish to attend.
- If you are applying to a college or other post-secondary institution, you must apply for financial aid and follow the school's procedures and timetables. You need to advise DVR of any disability-related needs that you will have in attending the program.
- You must maintain the performance requirements of the school or program to remain in good standing.
- You need to discuss any significant changes with your VR Counselor beforehand as your Individualized Plan for Employment may need to be revised.
- You must provide VR with copies of your grades or progress reports and maintain regular contact with your VR Counselor.

Vocational Rehabilitation, Post-Secondary Education, Training and You: A Consumer's Guide (Developed by Maine Client Assistance Program)

Introduction: The purpose of this section of the handbook is to help you understand how Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and Post-Secondary Education work and to explain all the roles and responsibilities of the individuals who are involved in the process.

This information pertains to training programs, both educational and vocational, which qualify for and participate in the Federal Financial Student Aid Program. A Financial Aid Information Form will be used to identify your costs, resources and VR's contribution towards your program.

While we have attempted to identify the important issues and concerns, we know you will have questions. Please contact your VR Counselor when this occurs. Remember that good planning and frequent and open communication with all the players is the key to success in this area.

What Does the Law Say? Federal laws and the Maine VR rules say that if post-secondary education is required for you to attain an employment goal (job), VR may be able to help. The laws also say, however, that VR support for post-secondary education cannot be provided unless you make maximum efforts to secure assistance from other sources, including federal student aid.

What Is Financial Aid? Financial aid is designed to help individuals meet their educational expenses when their own resources are not sufficient. A student who believes that his resources and those of his/her family are not sufficient to pay for all the costs of attendance (tuition, room and board, books, transportation, campus activities, etc.) should apply for financial aid through the Financial Aid Office (FAO) of the institution he or she plans to attend. Three types of aid are available.

- Grants – gifts and scholarships, which do not have to be repaid.
- Loans – money borrowed to cover school costs. It must be repaid, usually with interest, over a specified period of time. This usually takes place after the student has left school or graduated.

- Work Study – employment, which enables a student to earn a portion of school costs.

The Federal Government contributes to all three types of student financial aid.

What Is Family Contribution? The family contribution is the amount of money the family of a student is expected to contribute toward college expenses. The family includes the student and the student's parents in the case of a dependent student, or the student and spouse, if any, in the case of an independent student. The amount the family is expected to contribute is calculated by a standardized needs formula that takes into account the family's financial resources (income and assets), family size and basic living expenses. VR must accept the family contribution amount provided by the FAO. All students applying for Federal financial assistance are required to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). There is no charge to the student or the student's family for the processing of this form or for determining the student's eligibility for Federal financial assistance.

Some students receive little or no financial support from their parents when they enroll in a post-secondary education program. A student may qualify as financially independent if he/she:

- Is twenty-four (24) years of age or older by December 31 of the award year
- Is a veteran of the Armed Forces of the United States
- Is a graduate or professional student
- Is an orphan or ward of the court;
- Is married; and/or has legal dependents other than a spouse
- Or is a student for whom a financial aid administrator makes a documented determination of independence by reason of other unusual circumstances.

The family contribution of an independent student is calculated based upon the income and assets of the student and spouse, if married.

Am I Required to Take a Loan? You are encouraged to take out loans towards your education, but this is not a federal or state

requirement. However, most people realize that loans are a necessary part of attending a post-secondary education program. Consider the loans an investment in your future. Also you may need to consider taking out a loan to cover basic living expenses.

If you have defaulted on a previous student loan, you will be unable to receive any grants, additional student loans or work study assistance. You will need to demonstrate that you have made a reasonable effort to clear your default status before VR will consider replacing any grant award. As stated previously, VR support for post secondary training cannot be provided unless you make maximum efforts to secure assistance from other sources.

How Does Vocational Rehabilitation fit Into the Financial Aid Process? Once post-secondary education has been identified as a service you need to reach your employment goal, a coordinated, multi-step effort involving the institution, VR and you begins.

STEP 1:

You will be asked to fill out SECTION A, PART I of the VR Financial Aid Information Exchange Form. Once SECTION A, PART I is completed, this is sent to the Financial Aid Office (FAO) at the institution you plan to attend.

STEP 2:

SECTION B, PART I of the form is completed by the FAO using the information you provide, the number of courses, where you will live, etc. This section identifies your education-related expenses, expected contributions and all grants, loans, scholarships and/or work-study support. The result of these calculations is called your Unmet-Need, which is costs minus resources. The FAO keeps a copy and a copy is forwarded to your VR Counselor. Your VR Counselor is responsible for getting a copy to you.

STEP 3:

You and your VR Counselor will take the information from SECTION B of PART I and complete all sections of PART II of the form.

The reason for completing this form is to identify your actual costs of attending the program (vs. standard figures used by FAO), your resources from all sources, any disability-related expenses and to specify the amount of financial support you will receive from VR. Based on the information in Part II, the Notification of Vocational Rehabilitation Funding form Part III will be completed with a copy forwarded to the FAO, a copy remains with VR and you receive a copy.

STEP 4:

Many people will not need to be concerned with this step. However, if your VR Counselor has increased the Unmet Need amount due to higher actual costs such as transportation, childcare etc., the FAO will also need to increase your budget and the Unmet Need. If there are disability-related expenses provided from VR, your budget and the Unmet Need would need to be adjusted. None of these actions should decrease the amount of financial aid you will receive from the institution.

STEP 5:

The final step in the process is for VR to forward the specified financial support to the institution.

What educational expenses are considered disability related?

The student with a disability is often faced with additional expenses not incurred by other students. Examples of these expenses include:

- Purchase and maintenance of disability-related equipment;
- Expense of services for personal use or study such as readers, or personal care attendants;
- Transportation necessary to pursue an academic program, if regular transportation is not accessible;
- Medical expenses relating directly to the individual's disability that are not covered by insurance.

Students should be sure to inform the FAO of disability-related expenses that may previously have been covered by the family budget.

These may also include food and veterinary bills for guide dogs, batteries for hearing aids and Telecommunication Devices for the

Deaf, and/or costs of recruiting and training readers or personal care attendants. Often, leaving home necessitates the purchase of new or additional equipment that will allow the student to be independent at school. Some of the equipment and support services may be available at the post-secondary institution. You and your VR Counselor should check with the 504 Coordinator or Office of Disability Support Services at the institution to see what is available there.

What Are My Responsibilities? Attending post secondary education carries with it a variety of responsibilities. These include:

- Applying for and complete the Financial Aid information in a timely manner.
- Explore other funding resources which could assist in some post-secondary expenses. Examples of these resources include the Plan for Achieving Self Support (PASS), Ticket to Work, ASPIRE, VA and Workforce Development Center.
- Maintain at least six credit hours per semester which demonstrates academic progress.
- Remain in good academic standing with the institution.
- Provide your counselor with a copy of your grades on a regular basis.
- Meet with the disability services department to make arrangements for any accommodations you require.
- You will be required to notify your VR Counselor of any changes in your status, i.e. full to part-time, and of any problems you are encountering at the institution

Places for Additional Information: Your VR Counselor and FAO should be able to answer the questions you have. Here are some places for more information.

1. The Federal Student Aid website has a number of resources and publishes a booklet called "Funding Education Beyond High School" which is available at http://studentaid.ed.gov/students/publications/student_guide/index.html

2. The Finance Authority of Maine (FAME) is a program that may be a resource for students who want to further their education. In some cases, eligibility is possible for those who have defaulted on a previous loan, if certain criteria are met. For more information:

Finance Authority of Maine (FAME)
5 Community Drive, P.O. Box 949
Augusta, ME 04332-0949
TEL: (207) 623-3263 or 1-800-228-3734
TTY: (207) 626-2717
FAX: (207) 623-0095
<http://www.famemaine.com/>

3. The Client Assistance Program (CAP) is a federally funded advocacy program that can provide information and, if necessary, representation to clients/applicants of VR. For more information:

CARES, Inc.
134 Main St., Suite 2C
Winthrop, ME 04364
207-377-7055 or toll-free at 1-800-773-7055 for voice /TTY
Or Maine relay by dialing 711
fax number 207-377-7057
www.caresinc.org

A Final Word: Financial aid is based upon a partnership between the student, parents, post-secondary institutions, federal government and agencies, such as VR. The financial aid process can be complex and time-consuming. It requires coordination, cooperation and communication between the FAO, the VR Counselor and you. Ask questions when things are not clear to you. Make sure you understand the roles and responsibilities of all the players. Leave enough time to complete all the paperwork. Be aware of the deadlines of the two organizations. And remember – good planning and frequent communication are the keys to success.

ON-THE-JOB TRAINING

Can DVR Help Me to Find a Job Where I Can Also Learn a Skill or a Trade?

Yes, if training is necessary for you to achieve the job goal that you and your VR Counselor have agreed to in your Individualized Plan for Employment. The Division will assist you to obtain the skills you require to be successful in employment. In some cases an alternative to formal classroom training is to learn the skills you need while working at the job you desire. This is called on-the-job training (OJT). You and your counselor will need to fully discuss the pros and cons of you learning the required skills in this manner.

How Do I Know If an OJT Will Work For Me?

Once a job goal has been agreed upon and it is determined that you require training to obtain the skills you need to be successful in that job, you and your VR Counselor will begin the discussion of how you can best learn the skills. If your job goal is one that does not require formal education, you and your VR Counselor can explore the possibility of developing an on-the-job training site.

How Does an OJT Work?

On the Job Training- An “On the Job Training” (OJT) is an arrangement between an employer and DVR where the employer agrees to hire an individual, and train them while DVR assists with the initial costs of the training and support.

It is not always easy to find an employer who is willing to train workers on the job. Therefore, locating a job site may take considerable effort on the part of you and your VR Counselor.

Once it is agreed that this employer can offer you the skills you need to be successful at your job goal, a written contract will be developed between you, the employer, and DVR. Included in this contract will be the hourly wages you will receive from the employer, the hours of training you will receive, and the length of time it will take for you to obtain entry-level skills.

TRANSITION PLANNING FROM SCHOOL TO WORK

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation provides assistance to eligible students to assist them to make the transition from high school to the world of work.

What Can DVR Do While I Am Still in High School?

Beginning at age 16 or two (2) years before high school graduation, your VR Counselor may:

- Participate in Individualized Education Program (IEP) team meetings to assist in developing appropriate employment goals and objectives. If you are interested in having your VR Counselor attend any of these meetings, it will be important to give him/her sufficient notice of the meeting time, to insure that s/he is available;
- Get to know you and your family so that you have an understanding of how you can work with VR both before and after graduation;
- Initiate and complete the DVR referral process and determine your eligibility, prior to graduation;
- Consult with you, your family and school staff to help you select courses in school that will help you to meet your post-school goals as well as to promote opportunities for employment experiences while you are still in school;
- Assist you and your family in becoming familiar with, planning for and accessing needed employment-related adult service programs;
- Invite you to participate in the Transition Career Exploration Workshop curriculum to help you learn more about your strengths and skills; and
- Develop an Individualized Plan for Employment that specifies what services and supports DVR will provide for you upon graduation from high school, as well as outline responsibilities for you and DVR towards achieving a successful employment outcome.

REHABILITATION TECHNOLOGY

What Is Rehabilitation Technology?

Rehabilitation Technology, sometimes also referred to as Assistive Technology, is the evaluation and application of devices that assist individuals with disabilities to maintain or improve their ability to function. Rehabilitation Technology also includes any services needed to test, try, or learn the use of the devices. In vocational rehabilitation, rehabilitation technology is used for the purpose of assisting individuals to work more independently or to participate more independently in an Individualized Plan for Employment leading to competitive employment. There are many different kinds of technology devices. Some are simple and easy to use, such as a wide grip pencil, a telephone with large buttons, a calculator with large keys, a writing guide for a sheet of paper, a magnifier, or an adapted keyboard. Others are more complex and may require training to use. Examples include a computer with voice recognition software, a power wheelchair or scooter, prosthetic and orthotic devices (artificial limbs, braces), hearing aids and other communication devices, and motor vehicle modifications.

Your VR Counselor will work with you to determine whether you need any rehabilitation technology devices or services. An evaluation by a technology specialist (an expert outside of DVR) may be provided to assist you in learning what technology is available and how it might improve your functioning as you think about your career plans and goals, or how specific job functions can be accommodated.

What Is the Process to Get Rehabilitation Technology Services?

You and your VR Counselor may agree on simple devices that can in most cases be purchased quickly and easily.

When you and your VR Counselor decide that you need a Rehabilitation Technology consultation, your VR Counselor will contact the DVR consultant for a referral to a technology specialist. Arrangements will be made for the technology specialist to meet and evaluate you in your home, school, or place of employment.

During the meeting, the technology specialist will talk with you about your specific needs and employment goals and may ask you to do some tasks to determine your level of functioning. After the meeting,

the technology specialist will write a report to your VR Counselor describing his/her findings and recommendations.

Your VR Counselor will share the report with you and you will have an opportunity to ask any questions that you may have about the report. Once you and your VR Counselor agree that the recommendations are necessary for your Individualized Plan for Employment to be successful, arrangements will be made to purchase the device or arrange for the service. The length of time it will take to receive the equipment depends on the type of technology, the availability, and the purchase process. Customized devices (designed and manufactured especially to fit you) will take more time. DVR will also usually need to get competitive bids for higher cost purchases, which will increase the time required.

The Division will try to accommodate your preferences and choices as much as possible. If you have a preferred product or vendor you should be sure to let your counselor know.

In some instances you may need training to learn how to use the equipment. You and your VR Counselor can arrange for you to learn how to use the device once you receive the equipment. It will be your responsibility to cooperate with the training, to practice, and to complete all assignments.

OTHER RESOURCES

MPower Adaptive Equipment Loan Program

Through this state bond funded program, individuals and businesses can obtain low interest loans from \$250 up to \$100,000 to enable the acquisition of assistive technology or to improve access at home or at work.

Individual may access the program in order to acquire items such as:

- Cars or Vans with hand controls and lifts
- Roll-in Showers
- Hearing aids
- Augmentative Communication Devices
- Telecommunication Devices for the Deaf- TTY
- Computers that speak aloud
- Wheelchair Lifts & Ramps
- Home Modifications, and
- Recreational Equipment (hand cycles, sports wheelchairs)

Businesses may access the resources in order to acquire items such as:

- Elevators & Lifts
- Building Modifications (Entrances, bathrooms, common areas)
- Worksite Adaptations for Employees, and
- Accessible Transit Vehicles

This program is jointly administered by Alpha One and the Finance Authority of Maine (FAME).

For More Information go to: <http://www.mpowerloans.org/>

Independent Living Services

What is the Independent Living Services Program?

The Independent Living Services (ILS) Program assists people who have significant disabilities to live more independently in their homes and communities. The program provides and arranges needed IL services subject to the availability of funds. The program is also an advocacy program for people with disabilities and their families.

Who is eligible for services through this Program?

To be eligible, you must:

- Have a significant physical or mental disability which severely limits your ability to function independently in your family or community;
- Be able to function independently in your family or community with assistance from IL services; and,
- Be able to plan your IL services independently or with assistance.

Eligible individuals are served in the following order:

1. Adults who will lose their current level of independence and would have to move to a more restrictive setting unless they receive services from the ILS Program.
2. Adults who, with assistance from the ILS Program, can move to a more independent setting.
3. Adults who, with assistance from the ILS Program, can overcome a barrier to independent living.
4. All other eligible individuals.
5. Please note that there may be a waiting list in place for these services. Contact Alpha One for further information.

How do I apply for Independent Living Services?

DVR receives federal funds for the Independent Living Services Program and contracts out for the provision of services. DVR currently contracts with Alpha One, a Center for Independent Living. For more information and to apply for the ILS Program, contact the Alpha One office nearest you at:

Alpha One

www.alpha-one.org

Alpha One, South Portland Office

127 Main Street
South Portland, ME 04106

(207) 767-2189 - Voice
(800) 640-7200 - Voice
(207) 799-8346 - Fax
(207) 767-5387 - TTY
(866) 906-5375 - TTY

Alpha One, Bangor Office

1048 Union St, Ste 2
Bangor, ME 04401

(207) 941-6553 - Voice
(877) 229-8954 - TTY
(207) 941-6410 - Fax

What Services Are Available Through the ILS Program?

All ILS Program services are carried out through an Independent Living Plan that is mutually agreed upon by you and your IL counselor. The four core services that every Independent Living Center provides are:

- Information and Referral
- Individual Independent Living Skills Training
- Peer Counseling
- Individual and Systems Advocacy

In addition, the ILS Program can purchase a variety of products and services to help you be more independent in your home and/or community. Some examples of products and services available through this program include:

- Home modifications
- Hand controls and lifts for vehicles
- Augmentative Communication Devices
- Telecommunication Devices for the Deaf (TTYs)
- Counseling Services
- Mobility Training

The ILS Program cannot pay for services that are traditionally provided by other state, federal or private agencies. There is a maximum lifetime expenditure of \$5,000 allowed for each eligible individual served by the ILS Program.

OTHER SERVICES AVAILABLE FROM THE BUREAU OF REHABILITATION SERVICES

The Division for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Late Deafened

The Division for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened is part of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and provides a program of services to people who are deaf, hard of hearing, and late deafened. In addition to VR services, the Division also provides services such as: publication of a Resource Guide, Maine Lines for the Deaf (newsletter), ongoing telecommunication device and other training programs for state agencies, information and referral, advocacy, accessibility promotion, Deaf Identification Cards, and a listing of qualified legal interpreters.

For more information contact:

Division for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Late Deafened
45 Commerce Drive
150 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333
Videophone 207-470-7668
TTY 207-623-7957

The Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired

If you have a vision problem that prevents you from carrying out the activities of daily living, getting an education or a job, there is help. The Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired can provide many services to persons with severe visual impairments.

INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES

Adaptive skill-training provides alternative skills to accomplish activities of daily living. Homemaking skills training may include meal preparation, shopping, and cleaning. Individuals may be trained in a variety of personal management skills such as managing money, dialing a telephone, and telling time. Mobility instruction assists individuals to travel safely through the use of alternative techniques.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES:

The goal of vocational rehabilitation services is to help you retain or return to employment.

You could receive:

- Individual counseling and guidance, and vocational assessment.
- Orientation and mobility instruction to develop independent travel skills.
- Other training, devices, treatment, job placement and follow-up services to enable you to succeed in a job.

EDUCATION SERVICES FOR CHILDREN

Comprehensive services for children and families begin as soon as a child is identified as blind or visually impaired.

Education consultants and teachers work with parents and schools to develop and implement an individualized education program.

The Division can supply specialized materials and equipment to support an individualized education program.

LIBRARY SERVICES:

The Maine State Library Talking Book Program provides books and magazines in a recorded cassette or disc format to people who are visually impaired, blind, or physically handicapped.

Applications are available from the Maine State Library and from public library service centers throughout the state, or by calling the Special Services toll-free number: 1-800-762-7106

FINANCIAL SERVICES:

Any person legally blind and in need, may apply for SSI or SSDI at the nearest Social Security Administration office. For information, please call:

622-1451 or 1-800-772-1213

I.D. CARDS FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED AND BLIND INDIVIDUALS:

A card is available to persons who have a visual impairment and who do not have a driver's license. This card is acceptable identification for cashing checks and other transactions. It may be obtained by calling any Department of Motor Vehicles office. The fee is \$5.00.

REAL ESTATE TAX EXEMPTION:

Persons who are legally blind may receive a real estate tax exemption of up to \$4,000.00 on their property valuation by applying through your local town office.

You must provide a medical report that states "you are legally blind".

Bureau of Rehabilitation Offices

www.maine.gov/rehab

Augusta (staff of both DBVI & DVR)

21 Enterprise Dr., Suite 2
Augusta, ME 04333-0073
624-5120 or 1-800-760-1573
TTY please use Relay 711
287-6249 (Fax)

Bangor (staff of both DBVI & DVR)

45 Oak Street, Suite 1
Bangor, ME 04401-6589
561-4000 or 1-888-545-8811
TTY please use Relay 711
561-4027 (Fax)

Houlton (DVR staff only, for DBVI see Presque Isle)

91 Military Street, Suite 3
Houlton, ME 04730-2421
532-5300 or 1-800-691-0033
TTY please use Relay 711
532-5309 (Fax)

Lewiston (staff of both DBVI & DVR*)

5 Mollison Way
Lewiston, ME 04240
753-9000 or 1-800-741-2991
TTY please use Relay 711
753-9051 (Fax)

Machias (DVR staff only, for DBVI see Bangor)

15 Prescott Drive, Suite 2
Machias, ME 04654-9751
255-1926 or 1-800-770-7774
TTY please use Relay 711
255-3091 (Fax)

Portland (staff of both DBVI & DVR)

185 Lancaster Street
Portland, ME 04101-2453
771-5627 or 1-800-315-1192
TTY please use Relay 711
879-7553 (Fax)

Presque Isle (staff of both DBVI & DVR)

66 Spruce Street, Suite 3
Presque Isle, ME 04769
760-6300 or 1-800-635-0357
TTY please use Relay 711
760-6316 (Fax)

Rockland (staff of both DBVI & DVR)

91 Camden Street, Suite 202
Rockland, ME 04841-2421
596-2641 or 1-877-421-7916
TTY please use Relay 711
594-1858 (Fax)

Saco (York County) – now located in Portland

185 Lancaster Street
Portland, ME 04101-2453
771-5627 or 1-800-315-1192
TTY please use Relay 711
879-7553 (Fax)

Skowhegan (DVR staff only, for DBVI see Augusta)

98 North Avenue, Suite 16
Skowhegan, ME 04976
474-4958 or 1-800-760-1572
TTY please use Relay 711
474-4914 (Fax)