

# Overview of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)

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For Community Rehabilitation Providers



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## I. INTRODUCTION

The intention of this overview is to provide Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) with basic background information that will help work as a CRP with Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR).

## II. HISTORICAL TIMELINE

- 1900** **Progressive Education Movement** stressed the importance of vocational education; started professional organization of vocational counselors
- 1916** **National Defense Act** provided for vocational training of soldiers while in active services
- 1917** **Smith-Hughes Act** established federal assistance grants to states for vocational education programs
- 1918** **Smith-Sears Soldiers Rehabilitation Act** established a program of rehabilitation for soldiers on active duty
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- 1920** Passage of **Smith-Fess Act** authorizing first federal spending for civilian rehabilitation X affecting only persons who were physically disabled
- 1930** 44 states were participating in the Federal-State program of Vocational Rehabilitation
- 1935** **Social Security Act** made VR permanent; also established unemployment compensation, old age insurance, child health and welfare services, crippled childrens= services, and public assistance to the aged, blind, and dependent children.
- 1936** **Randolph-Shepard Act** provided for establishment of vendor operations and other concessions to blind individuals in federal establishments
- 1943** Barden-LaFollette Act (**Vocational Rehabilitation Act**) expanded public rehabilitation eligibility to include the emotionally disturbed, and mentally retarded; expanded service to include physical restoration, and removed ceiling on appropriation.
- World War II Disabled Veterans Rehabilitation Act (Welsh-Clark) provided vocational rehabilitation for disabled veterans.
- 1954** **Vocational Rehabilitation Act Amendments** (Hill-Burton Act) provided the basis for future expansion through greater financial support, research and demonstration grants, professional preparation grants, state agency expansion and improvement grants, and grants to expand rehabilitation facilities.

- 1965**      **VR Act Amendments** accelerated the expansion and improvement of services by allotting 75% federal funds to the state agencies, funding state-wide planning for growth, grants to expand rehab facilities.
- 1970**      **Developmental Disabilities Services and Facilities Construction Act** provided responsibility to states for planning and implementing services to people with epilepsy, mental retardation, cerebral palsy.
- 1973**      **Rehabilitation Act re-authorized**; priority placed on services to severely disabled persons; also provided for affirmative action in employment (Section 503) and nondiscrimination by federal contractors and grantees (Section 504). Also added the IWRP and supportive services such as CAP and PWI; 60 day follow-up for closure
- 1978**      **Rehabilitation Act Amendments** added Independent Living and established the National Institute of Handicapped Research.
- 1984**      **Deficit Reform Act** - established Targeted Jobs Tax Credit (TJTC)
- 1986**      **Rehabilitation Act Amendments** incorporating employability as part of eligibility criteria and introducing supported employment
- 1990**      **Passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**
- 1992**      **Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act** emphasize severe disability, presumption of eligibility, client choice, and qualified personnel
- 2008**      **Amendments to the ADA** (effective January 1, 2009) expands the definition of “disability” by rejecting prior U.S. Supreme Court’s Sutton v. United Air Lines, Inc” case which narrowly defined it. This restores ADA protections against discrimination to people who compensate for their disabilities through various mitigating measures



### III. OVERVIEW OF DVR SERVICES

Please review our seven minute orientation video on our public DVR website:  
<http://www.labor.state.ak.us/dvr/ability.htm>

Foundation of all DVR services:

- Individualized to meet the needs of each person
- Employment or disability related
- Jointly developed and agreed upon by client & counselor through an “informed choice and strengths based” approach
- The Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) is **the** road map
- Time limited with the ultimate goal of securing employment
- Collaborative resourcing and partnering

DVR’s services may include:

1. Eligibility to determine in client can become a DVR consumer
2. Evaluation to help determine client’s unique capabilities and needs
3. Guidance, Counseling and Referral
4. Case-management coordination with other agencies
5. Interpreter, reading and Tutoring
6. Training such as college or vocational programs
7. Providing knowledge about the job market
8. Developing a mutual “Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)” that includes documenting:
  - i. Specific job goals and timelines
  - ii. List of services needed and who provides them
  - iii. Starting & ending dates of those services
  - iv. Funding arrangements to support this plan; i.e. supportive employment, etc.
  - v. Client responsibilities
  - vi. Ways to track client progress
  - vii. Financial responsibilities
9. Job Search and Placement activities including employment services
10. Accommodations and Assistive Technology (AT)
11. Job Coaching, Mentoring and/or On-the-Job-Training (OJT)
12. Post job placement assistance

- a. Restoration; medical, physical and/or psychological assistance including treatment for injuries and/or other medical needs

Critical CRP-DVR coordination and communication:

- Roles & expectations (“vendor”, “partner”, both?)
- Appropriate billing and reporting practices (timeliness, justification, etc.)
- On-going communication
- Understanding where the client is in the service plan
- “Informed Choice” translation
- “Confidentiality & Ethical” considerations

| <b>IV. BASIC VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROCESS</b>  |  |
|---|--|
| (DVR Policy at: <a href="http://www.labor.state.ak.us/dvr/policy_temp.htm">http://www.labor.state.ak.us/dvr/policy_temp.htm</a> ) |  |
| <b>RECEIVE APPLICATION &amp; ORIENTATION</b>  | People who apply or who are referred to Vocational Rehabilitation must complete an application and orientation on services   |
| <b>EVALUATE ELIGIBILITY AND POTENTIAL</b><br><br>(Usually complete within 60 days)  | <p>The person is then evaluated to determine eligibility and potential for employment. People are eligible who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&lt; have a physical or mental disability</li> <li>&lt; which is a substantial barrier to employment</li> <li>&lt; are expected to benefit from VR services</li> <li>&lt; require VR services to prepare for, secure, retain or regain employment consistent with the individual’s strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests &amp; informed choice.</li> <li>&lt; structured assessment activities including vocational evaluation, situational assessment, discovery and/or trail work</li> </ul> |
| <b>PREPARE AN INDIVIDUAL PLAN FOR EMPLOYMENT (IPE)</b><br><br>(Usually complete within 180 days)                                  | <p>If a person is eligible, the client and counselor together prepare a written individual employment plan (IPE). The plan includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&lt; counseling and guidance activities including</li> <li>&lt; the vocational goal</li> <li>&lt; specific services provided</li> <li>&lt; client participation responsibilities</li> <li>&lt; intermediate objectives</li> <li>&lt; financial services when necessary (clients are asked to share as much as possible in the costs of services)</li> <li>&lt; job placement activities</li> <li>&lt; post placement/supportive employment activities if needed</li> </ul>   |

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| <p>PROVIDE NECESSARY SERVICES</p> | <p>In addition to counseling and guidance, rehabilitation services may include such things as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&lt; benefits analysis</li> <li>&lt; on-the-job training</li> <li>&lt; job search assistance</li> <li>&lt; education</li> <li>&lt; books, supplies, tools</li> <li>&lt; transportation</li> <li>&lt; medical treatment and devices</li> <li>&lt; coordinating services with partner agencies</li> </ul> |
| <p>HELP WITH JOB PLACEMENT</p>    | <p>At the conclusion of rehabilitation, the counselor works with the client to find and secure suitable employment. A case is considered closed when a client has been employed at least 90 days in a suitable job (which may be supported employment, working at home, or other community-referenced vocational activity)</p>  |
| <p>FOLLOW-UP</p>                  | <p>Post-employment services may be provided to help the client maintain his or her job, and to help overcome difficulties that may be encountered.</p>  |

**V. TIPS IN ESTABLISHING CREDIBILITY AND BECOMING A PREFERRED SERVICE PROVIDER WITH VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION**

*(originally developed by Gaylene Glidewell, St. Vincent de Paul, Eugene, OR)*

**Question #1:** Have you visited your local Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) office in the last month?

**Question #2:** Can you list the names of the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRC) and their administrative support staff..... from memory?

**Question #3:** Have you spoken with the VR District/Regional Manager in the last 3 months?

**Question #4:** Has a VRC visited your office/facility in the last month?

**Question #5:** Have you attended a VR Staff Meeting in the last year?

**Question #6:** Do you survey VRCs to gauge their satisfaction with your services?

If you answered NO to any of the above questions, you can improve your working relationship with Vocational Rehabilitation. This will also help you understand their expectations and needs.

VR is an agency with rules, regulations and large caseloads. Understand the rules on eligibility and how a case can reasonably make progress through the system. What are reasonable

timeframes for delivering these services? What services can be reasonably provided and what do they need to justify expenditures? How can services be best coordinated with VR? As with many government agencies the rules can be interpreted in different ways by different Case Managers/Counselors so it's imperative you learn the working style of each referring VRC. You are a key partner with a VRC to provide high quality services. The VRC and client are also your customers. The VRC is purchasing your services to accomplish a common goal. Good personal relationships are not only extremely important but can mean survival in continuing to be utilized as a preferred working partner in your CRP role.

### **CRP Guidelines:**

- Find out how involved the referring VRC wants to be in the day-to-day events or decisions made regarding the client.
- Find out the VRCs methods and idiosyncrasies, and take nothing for granted.
- Remember the client doesn't belong to you! You are performing a service.
- Ensure a good "handoff" of services with the client and VRC in the beginning of providing the service.
- Follow up with reasonable updates to the VRC and appropriate documentation.
- Send monthly reports that can be read and understood by someone outside of your agency and that include a narrative regarding progress and recommendations.
- When you call with a problem always have ideas about the solution.
- Always be sure to address each of the questions asked by the VRC in the client plan.
- Ask VRCs if your reports are meeting their needs.
- Familiarize yourself with agency terminology and testing being used by the agency.
- Stay up to date on VR rules and policy changes.
- Add new services to your program at least 2 times a year.
- Get on the VR staff meeting agenda quarterly to explain the new and exciting things that your agency is doing.
- Take every opportunity to stay in touch both by phone and by person, without being a nuisance.
- Choose 1 or 2 people in your agency to be the primary contact for VR. This will limit misinformation being passed around and frustration of VRCs not knowing who to contact regarding client issues/problems.



- Don't allow yourself to be drawn into a power play among the client, the VRC, and yourself. If you find yourself being excessively complimented while the VRC is being put down, a red light should start flashing, contact the VRC for a discussion and a plan to address the complaints.
- Be pro-active and keep communication flowing at whatever level is comfortable for the VRC.
- Always return phone calls promptly.
- Never promise something you cannot produce, and always follow through.
- Set a professional standard for your agency and personnel. Make sure your personnel are well trained and understand what your standards require.
- Find other community resources to enhance the services purchased by VR and let them know.
- You can assume VRCs have large caseloads with a lot of work they are attempting to juggle so be please be respectful and patient in that regard

## **VI. DVR Guiding Principals**

DVR believes in:

- The empowering value of employment in an individual's life.
- Honoring and respecting each individual's strengths, skills, choices, abilities and cultural identity.
- Developing strong partnerships with Tribal vocational rehabilitation programs, schools, job-centers and centers for independent living.
- Delivering high quality vocational rehabilitation services.
- Employing and developing highly qualified and skilled rehabilitation staff.
- The principles of stewardship in the use of public resources.

**VII. DVR Contact Info:** <http://www.labor.state.ak.us/dvr/menu/contact.htm>

**VIII. DVR Accomplishments:** <http://labor.state.ak.us/dvr/home.htm>