

Preparing for Life After High School

As a parent, you want your child to be prepared for the future. If your child has a disability and is transitioning from school to adulthood, Virginia's vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies can help. The two VR Agencies in Virginia are:

- DARS (Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services)
- DBVI (Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired)

These agencies are funded under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended within the Workforce Innovations and Opportunities Act (WIOA). The VR program helps students and adults with disabilities prepare for, get, and keep jobs that match their strengths and interests.

The VR program is an **eligibility** program. That means the person must meet certain requirements through a screening process.

To be eligible, they must:

1. Have physical or mental disability that makes it hard to work.
2. Be able to benefit from VR services (it's assumed they can unless proven otherwise).
3. Need help from VR to prepare for or find a job.



Once found eligible, your child and a VR counselor will work together on the IPE.

What Is the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)?

The IPE is a written plan that includes:

- **The job or career goal your child wants to reach.**
- **The services needed to help them get there.**
- **Who will provide the services?**

Who Develops the IPE?

- Under 18: You, your child, and the VR counselor work together.
- 18 or older: Your child leads the process. They can still include you or others they trust.
- If your adult child needs help making decisions, various options are available to them and to you as parents. You can learn more about this on the [PEATC decision-making factsheet](#).

Getting Ready for the IPE

Before developing the IPE, the VR agency must explain:

- What the IPE includes
- What help is available to create it
- If the individual or their family needs to pay for some services (per guidelines)
- What happens when there is disagreement with the plan or services in the plan, including a description of the Client Assistance Program (CAP).

What is the IPE Based On?

The IPE can be created using the current information your child already has. For example, if your child has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 plan at school, it can be used along with other records like transition assessments, vocational evaluations, or information from Pre-ETS (Pre-Employment Transition Services).

If this information is old or there's not enough information, the VR counselor may set up new assessments. These help show what your child is good at, what they need help with, and what kinds of jobs might be a good fit.



What Goes in the IPE?

Employment Goal

The job or career must be in a setting where people with and without disabilities work together and earn competitive wages, which means people with disabilities earn minimum wage or above and cannot be paid less than what people in similar positions earn. This is called competitive, integrated employment (CIE). CIE also means your child must have the same chance as other employees to get promoted and receive benefits, like health care benefits.

If your child needs a job coach to help them for a period of time, this is called supported employment, and long-term job supports will be discussed and arranged. Those supports must be listed in the IPE.

Ideas, Preferences, and Choices

Your child has the right to make **informed choices** about their plan. This means understanding their options, the pros and cons, and making decisions based on what matters to them.

Services to Reach the Goal

The IPE lists the services your child needs. This is not a full list, but examples may include:

- Career counseling and job coaching
- College or vocational training support
- Transportation
- Assistive technology or interpreters
- Work clothing, tools, or equipment.
- Benefits counseling
- Independent living skills
- Job search and interview help
- Personal assistance or supported employment

Who Provides Services?

Services may be provided by the VR agency or through other approved organizations.

Where Are Services Delivered?

Services happen in the most integrated (inclusive) setting possible—usually in the community. Sometimes, services are provided in a training facility like Virginia’s Wilson Work Force Center. This may happen if the program is not available in the community, or it is the best place to learn skills (for example, if your child needs to learn independent living skills). This decision is made by the counselor, the individual, and, if they have a representative (like a parent), that person.

How Long Does the IPE Last?

The plan must be created within 90 days of the person being found eligible. It stays in place until your child reaches their employment goal or no longer wants services. It’s reviewed at least once a year.

Measuring Progress

Progress toward reaching the goal is tracked to ensure success and to see if anything in the IPE may need to be changed. For example, a student in college may need to keep a C average for VR to continue supporting them. Or they may need to pass certain tests. Your child may find that they need additional services or supports, and the IPE can be changed to include those if the counselor agrees.

Responsibilities of the Individual

- Stay in contact with their counselor.
- Attend appointments and training.
- Follow the steps in their IPE.
- In some cases, contribute financially.

The individual also has [rights](#), such as:

- Participating in all decisions
- Bringing someone to meetings
- Receiving copies of evaluations and the IPE
- Disagreeing and using appeal options

The VR Agency's Responsibilities

- Help create and update the IPE
- Pay for agreed-upon services
- Monitor progress
- Solve problems if they come up
- Coordinate with your child's IEP or 504 Plan if they are still in school

Financial Aid and Comparable Benefits

Before paying for some services (like college tuition), VR may ask that your child first apply for financial aid, scholarships, or use other available resources. These are called comparable benefits.

Coordination with School Systems

For students in transition, the IPE must include a **statement about how VR services will be coordinated** with the goals, objectives, and services they have in their **IEP or 504 plan**.

If You or Your Child Disagree with the IPE or Services

- Ask for a meeting or mediation.
- Ask for a Fair Hearing (an administrative hearing officer will review the facts of the case and make a decision within a certain period of time).
- Get help from the [Client Assistance Program \(CAP\)](#) at the disAbility Law Center of Virginia

Additional Resources

- [DARS VR Services](#)
- [DBVI VR Services](#)
- [DRS Policy and Procedure Manual - Chapter 5 PLAN Individualized Plan for Employment \(wwrc.net\)](#)
- [eCFR:: 34 CFR 361.45 -- Development of the individualized plan for employment](#)
- [eCFR:: 34 CFR 361.46 -- Content of the individualized plan for employment](#)



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