

## **RSA Frequently-Asked Questions About RSA (6.20.2017)**

### **1. What programs exist to help people with disabilities become employed?**

While several programs exist to assist individuals with disabilities to become employed, the primary one overseen by the Department of Education is the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program. Under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act), as amended by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), States receive Federal grants to operate a comprehensive VR program. These funds are awarded to designated State VR agencies within each State. This State-operated program is designed to assess, plan, develop, and provide VR services to eligible individuals with disabilities, consistent with their strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, informed choice, and economic self-sufficiency. By providing services, the VR program enables individuals with disabilities to prepare for and engage in employment. The VR program is an integral part of a statewide workforce development system.

### **2. Who is eligible for the Vocational Rehabilitation program?**

According to section 102(a) of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended by WIOA, to be eligible for VR services, an individual must be an "individual with a disability" under section 7(20)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act who:

Has a physical or mental impairment which constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment for the individual; and

Requires VR services to prepare for, secure, retain, advance in, or regain employment.

The VR agency must presume that an individual who meets these eligibility criteria can benefit from VR services to achieve an employment outcome.

Individuals who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and/or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits are presumed to be eligible for VR services leading to employment, unless there is clear and convincing evidence that they are too significantly disabled to benefit from VR services.

### **3. If I am eligible for the Vocational Rehabilitation program, do I automatically receive services?**

Not all individuals who are eligible will receive VR services. The Rehabilitation Act, as amended by WIOA, requires the VR program to serve individuals with the most significant disabilities first when there are not enough resources to serve everyone who is eligible for VR services. This means that individuals with the most significant disabilities are given a priority over those with less significant disabilities. This process is called an "order of selection."

### **4. How do I apply for services?**

To apply for services, an individual may submit a written application. An individual will be considered to have "submitted an application" when he/she "requests" VR services and provides sufficient information for the VR agency to determine eligibility. A VR agency must

determine within 60 days of application unless the VR counselor and individual agree to an extension.

### **5. What services can the Vocational Rehabilitation program provide?**

According to Section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended by WIOA, VR services are those services that an eligible individual may need in order to achieve his/her employment outcome. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- an assessment for determining eligibility and VR needs;
- vocational counseling, guidance, and referral services;
- physical and mental restoration services;
- vocational and other training, including personal and vocational adjustment services, books, tools, and other training materials;
- maintenance for additional costs incurred while the individual is receiving certain VR services;
- transportation related to other VR services;
- interpreter services for individuals who are deaf;
- reader services for individuals who are blind;
- transition services for students and youth with disabilities that facilitate the transition from school to postsecondary life, such as achievement of an employment outcome in competitive integrated employment or pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities;
- personal assistance services (including training in managing, supervising, and directing personal assistance services) while an individual is receiving VR services;
- rehabilitation technology services and devices;
- customized employment;
- supported employment services;
- job-related services, including job search and placement assistance, job retention services, follow-up services, and follow-along services; and
- specific post-employment services necessary to assist an individual with a disability to, retain, regain, or advance in employment.

### **6. Are there grants or scholarships available for people with disabilities who want to go to college?**

Policies for providing financial assistance to persons with disabilities who are attending postsecondary education vary among State VR agencies, depending in part on the resources available to the State VR agency. In many cases, even the most generous of financial assistance provided by VR agencies will not cover all of a student's expected expenses, leaving a need for additional family contributions or loans. Students with disabilities should apply for Federal financial assistance from the same financial aid programs available to all students. To learn more about financial assistance available for students, go to: <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/>

### **7. How do I contact the Vocational Rehabilitation agency in my state?**

The URL <https://rsa.ed.gov/people.cfm?tab=2> provides a list of State VR agencies nationwide. Contact the one in your State for more information.

## **8. What can I do if I am not satisfied with my experience with the Vocational Rehabilitation program?**

Although RSA administers the VR program in each State, our authority to intervene in individual cases is limited. One of our primary roles is to ensure that individuals with disabilities have the opportunity to exercise their rights to due process when they believe their rights have been violated.

Section 102(c) of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended by WIOA, establishes an appeals process for individuals who are dissatisfied with the services that the VR program is or is not providing. The Rehabilitation Act gives individuals the right to pursue mediation as a means of resolving the complaint against the agency. The Rehabilitation Act also establishes a formal hearing process and a judicial review process for individuals. You may use any or all of these methods of appeal in order to resolve your concerns.

The Rehabilitation Act also establishes the Client Assistance Program (CAP) to assist individuals in resolving disputes with the VR agency. CAP has the authority to advocate on an individual's behalf to resolve a dispute between the individual and the VR agency. You can contact the CAP in your State directly for further advice and assistance regarding your rights to appeal.

## **9. I am a student looking for financial assistance to help me become a rehabilitation professional. Do you have a scholarship program that can help me?**

Yes. RSA funds universities to provide scholarships to students interested in working as rehabilitation professionals in support of the public rehabilitation program. To find out how the program works, how to apply, and which universities participate, visit the scholarship section of the RSA Training Program website

## **10. How do I learn more about RSA?**

RSA's mission is to provide leadership and resources to assist State and other agencies in providing VR and other services to individuals with disabilities to maximize their employment, independence, and integration into the community and the competitive labor market. The most up to date information on all RSA programs and initiatives can be found on our What's New page. Stay in touch with RSA by signing up for email updates. We offer emails on a variety of topics.