



## **New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services**

### **Guidelines for School Personnel working with Transition Students**

- The New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) is the designated state unit (DSU) dedicated to providing vocational rehabilitation services to eligible individuals with disabilities as provided under Title IV of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 & the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. DVRS is a division within the New Jersey Department of Labor & Workforce Development and as such must be in compliance with both federal and state regulations. DVRS has 18 local offices throughout the state. The Mission of DVRS is to enable eligible individuals with disabilities to achieve employment outcomes consistent with their strengths, priorities, needs, abilities, and capabilities.
- DVRS provides a wide range of vocational rehabilitation services to people with disabilities in order to assist eligible individuals to obtain employment.
- The general scope of DVRS services includes: vocational counseling and guidance, job placement assistance, post-secondary education, vocational skills training, job coaching, supported employment, hearing loss services, psychological and cognitive services, prosthetic and orthotic devices, assistive technology, tools, and other services required by individuals to achieve their vocational goals.
- The DVRS Transition from School to Work Program collaborates with school districts to provide consultation, eligibility determination, and planning services to youth with disabilities who are transitioning from school to work and adult life. Transition students are high school students who have an IEP (Individualized Education Program) or who receive educational accommodations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, or have a significant disability(s) that may or may not require specialized services in school.
- Refer students with disabilities who are interested in DVRS services. Appropriate referrals would include students with significant physical and/or mental impairments that would require the need for vocational and rehabilitative assistance to prepare for, obtain and/or maintain employment. Some students who are referred may require services from DVRS in addition to

other adult service providers, in order to receive the full supports needed for successful employment.

- Transition students may receive services from both DVRS and Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) at the same time. Students who are blind or visually impaired should be referred to the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI) for vocational rehabilitation services.
- Transition students may apply to DVRS up to two years prior to exiting from school. Beginning at age 14, DVRS counselors can provide consultation to transition students, parents/guardians, and school personnel when deemed appropriate. This is also outlined on the DVRS website: <http://lwd.dol.state.nj.us/labor/dvrs/disabled/Transition.html>
- **Consultation can be provided whether or not a student has applied for and/or been made eligible for services.** Consultations can include: providing information about DVRS services, reviewing medical and vocational assessments, assistance with career exploration and vocational planning, recommendations for assistive technology, information on supported employment, community resources and other adult service providers, information on current labor market trends and “In Demand” occupations.
- Order of Selection – In the event there is a shortage of funds the DVRS Director may invoke an order of selection to serve individuals with the “most significant” disability as the priority.

***Steps in the DVRS process:***

1. **Referral** – Schools districts are primarily responsible for referring a student to DVRS, although students/parents and others may refer as well. It is preferred that schools use the “DVRS Confidential Referral Form” when referring to DVRS.

**(Note: The referral form is not an application and therefore does not indicate that the student has applied for services.)**

What to include with Referral - Documentation of student’s disability including medical and psychological information and evidence of diagnosis and functional limitations. This may include a copy of the most recent IEP, psychological, social, and learning assessments. Other assessments can also be useful especially the New Jersey Department of Education’s (NJDOE) Office of Special Education Programs, Vocational Profile. Documentation of current academic functioning is important in particular when a student has expressed a desire for further training/education after high school.

- 2. Application Process/Survey Interview** – Once a student is referred, he or she will meet with a DVRS counselor for what is called a “Survey Interview.” In this interview the DVRS counselor will explain the DVRS process, DVRS policies, and the full range of services that may be available.

If the student is in agreement to work within the scope of DVRS and has expressed an interest in achieving an employment goal, the student will then complete a DVRS application. Students are typically accompanied to the Survey interview by their parent(s) and/or guardian(s).

- 3. Eligibility Determination** – A DVRS counselor will assess a student’s eligibility for services based on determination that the student has a significant disability that could be an impediment to employment and as such the individual would require some type of services in order to obtain and/or maintain employment. Such determination is made within 60 days of student’s application for services unless with permission of student/parent this time period needs to be extended due to extenuating circumstances such as needing more time to obtain necessary documentation. The Student/parent will receive written notification of eligibility determination or ineligibility determination.

In cases where existing documentation is not sufficient to determine eligibility, students may participate in prevocational evaluations to determine work readiness; such assessments may be funded through the school or through DVRS if the individual has already exited the school system.

- 4. Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)** - A student who has been determined eligible for services will meet with a DVRS counselor to develop an IPE at which time the vocational goal and DVRS services needed to achieve such goal has been determined and agreed upon by student and DVRS.

The IPE is developed with consideration of the student’s interests, strengths, and abilities.

**Financial Needs Assessment-** DVRS prior to or at IPE meeting will conduct a financial needs assessment to determine how much financial participation, if any the DVRS consumer will need to provide toward the cost of services. DVRS will encourage all consumers to participate in the cost of their program. The assessment will include the income and liquid assets of the family unit within which the consumer resides.

If the student has expressed an interest in receiving “**cost services**” and is under age of 22 and/or not receiving SSI (Supplemental Security Income benefits) family income must be provided for the financial needs assessment. Cost services are provided upon graduation from secondary school and may include funding for such services as: tuition, assistive technology,

job uniform/tools, and time limited therapies not funded through health insurance. Such service provision is incorporated into the IPE and must serve in conjunction with a vocational plan and deemed necessary to obtain and or maintain employment.

“Non-cost” services other than vocational guidance and counseling are not typically provided until after graduation. These services may include: diagnostic assessments, and supported employment (job coaching). Vocational Guidance and Counseling is typically the service provided to students while still in school as well as after graduation. Schools are encouraged to provide transition services to the student to include opportunities for prevocational assessments, and job sampling. Information gathered from such activities can be utilized by the DVRS counselor to further assist the student with vocational planning.

5. **Case Closure** – DVRS provides services to an individual until such time that the individual has maintained competitive employment for a minimum of 90 days and is no longer receiving services other than Long Term Follow Along (LTFA.) LTFA is the provision of minimal supports by a job coach until such services are no longer needed to maintain employment. When services have been completed the case with DVRS will be closed, but some services may be available after closure if needed. Individuals also have the right to reapply for services at a later time.

***How schools can assist students in their transition from school to work:***

- Provide appropriate and comprehensive school documentation at the time of DVRS referral and/or prior to DVRS counselor attending IEP/transition meetings.
- Encourage referrals to DVRS in a timely manner, which may be two years prior to graduation; in order for DVRS counselors to have sufficient time to prepare students for the transition from school to work.
- Discuss with students/parents rationale for having DVRS counselor invited to IEP/transition meeting and obtain written consent from students/parents.
- Provide and utilize ongoing vocational assessments to assist students in preparing for work.
- Develop work based learning opportunities in school and community settings.

- Provide information to students regarding Adult Service Providers such as DVRS DDD, Social Security, and the Centers for Independent Living (CIL).
- Assist students in understanding their disability(s) and their right to request accommodations. Coordinate appropriate use of accommodations for students in the school setting that may also be utilized in higher education or employment.

***Other Transition from School to Work areas:***

- Every DVRS office assigns counselors to work with designated schools. Each office also has what is referred to as a “Lead Transition Counselor” (LTC), who assists in monitoring the transition activities of the office.
- There is also a Program Planning Development Specialist (PPDS,) located in DVRS’ Central Administrative office (Karen Carroll) who assists in monitoring the DVRS related transition activities throughout the state.
- Questions, issues or concerns regarding individual students or related matters can be directed to the local DVRS office which may include speaking with the DVRS assigned counselor for a particular student and/or school, and when appropriate Counseling Supervisor, or Manager.
- Pertinent information about a student’s case with DVRS can be given to school personnel if student/parent has signed a release of information/consent form.
- DVRS counselors may attend IEP meetings or other meetings at the school if their schedule allows and they are given sufficient advance notice. DVRS counselors may also be available via conference call, if counselor is not able to come to the school.
- Meetings between the student and DVRS counselor are typically conducted at the local DVRS office to encourage the student to participate in an independent manner in his/her interaction with DVRS as an Adult Service Provider.
- DVRS representatives participate in Transition related seminars and activities to include: Pathways to Adulthood series sponsored by the Family Support Center of NJ, Transition Coordinators Network (TCN) of NJ meetings, School Career Fairs, Dare to Dream Conferences, and the State Special Education Advisory Council (SSEAC.)

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