



## *A Guide to Community Employment and Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS)*

*Do you have a disability? VRS can help you:*

- ◆ Determine if you are eligible for services
- ◆ Explore what employment supports you need
- ◆ Transition from school to work
- ◆ Look for and identify job opportunities
- ◆ Find a job and stay employed
- ◆ Learn how to do your job
- ◆ And more!



## *A Message on Employment from a Self-Advocate:*

Going to work, having a job, earning money, and using talents and skills is an exciting idea. Are you interested in getting a job? As a person with an intellectual or other developmental disability, there may be services available to help make that dream of employment a reality.

Going to work – whether it is for the first time or you are returning to employment – does not have to be a scary thing. Actually, it can be a positive and educational experience that helps YOU find what YOU want to do with your life.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) is one service that might be a good fit for you. This guide will share basic information about how to make your way through VRS – and hopefully, get a job that fits your skills, interests and talents!

### *EMPLOYMENT*

- ◆ **Community Jobs:** Working in the community in an integrated setting for equal pay. Jobs could be full-time or part-time.
- ◆ **Self-employment:** Finding something you love to do and getting paid for it! In Indiana, there are self-employed self-advocates working as photographers, deejays, and other exciting jobs.

If you are interested in employment, VRS is a good place to start. This guide will help you learn more about Vocational Rehabilitation Services, what to expect, and how to prepare so that you have the right supports to find the job that is best for you.

Congratulations on your decision to look for employment!

Sincerely,

Kelsey Cowley  
President, Self-Advocates of Indiana

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## *Vocational Rehabilitation Services: The Basics*

If you are interested in getting a job and would like help, Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) is a good place to start. Sometimes "VRS" is called "VR."

Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) is a State-Federal partnership. It is a program that helps individuals with disabilities achieve their employment goals. Goals are based on interests, strengths and talents.

For more information or to locate your local VRS office, call: 800-545-7763 or visit [www.vrs.in.gov](http://www.vrs.in.gov).

### *Who is Eligible for VRS?*

- ◆ Are you a person with a disability?
- ◆ Do you need supports to get a job?
- ◆ Do you need supports to keep a job?

As stated by VRS, "eligible individuals must have a physical or mental impairment which creates a substantial impediment to employment and must require Vocational Rehabilitation Services to prepare for, secure, retain or regain employment. There must also be a reasonable expectation that you will be able to benefit from Vocational Rehabilitation Services in terms of an employment outcome."



## Navigating VRS: A Step-By-Step Guide

This chart shows the likely steps you will take through the VRS process towards becoming employed. Every individual's plan for employment may be a little different. The amount of time each step takes, as well as specific steps, may also be different.

### A. You Decide You Want a Job

- 1 • You, your family member or your Medicaid Waiver Case Manager calls Vocational Rehabilitation Services.
- 2 • Set up an appointment with VRS.
- 3 • VRS determines eligibility within 60 days of an individual's application. This may take longer if additional tests or evaluations are needed to help determine if you are eligible.  
• If you are determined not eligible, talk to your Case Manager. See Page 8.

### B. You Are Determined Eligible for VRS

*(Approximately 60 Days from date of application)*

- 4 • Create your Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) with VRS.
- 5 • Choose Your Employment Provider.  
• See Page 7 for "What should I ask to help me choose an Employment Provider."
- 6 • A Job Coach/Employment Specialist (ES) is assigned to your case from the employment provider.
- 7 • Your ES helps you find a job. This may take several weeks or months depending on the services and supports needed.



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## C. The Hiring Process

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- Schedule your job interview.
- See Page 7 for “What can I do while I am waiting?”

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- Prepare for your interview.
- See Page 7 for “Interviewing Tips.”

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- Complete your interview.
- If you are not hired, try again! Go back to Step 7 and look for other options.

## D. You Are Hired

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- Talk to your ES and employer about how to prepare for your first day on the job.
- Things to plan for include transportation, work schedule and what to wear.
- See Page 7 for “What can I do while I am waiting.”

## E. Start Your New Job

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- Your Employment Specialist will continue to be available for support and to check on how you are doing on your job for several weeks.

## F. You Are Employed — Congratulations!

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- If you have any concerns or difficulties on the job, remember you can always contact your ES or VR counselor.

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- If you lose or leave your job, don't give up! Return to VRS.

## *Key Players and Terms*

**Benefits Information Network (BIN):** A program that trains and supports staff from employment services agencies to provide VRS consumers information on federal and state benefit programs such as SSI, SSDI and Medicaid.

**Employment Provider (EP):** An organization approved by the state to provide employment services to eligible individuals. Employment Specialists (ES) work for Employment Providers.

**Employment Specialist (ES):** A person who helps an individual get and keep a job. They work directly with the individual looking for employment and potential employers. This person may also be called Employment Consultant, Employment Advisor, Job Developer, Job Coach, or another name.

**Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE):** A plan of services under VRS that helps individuals get and keep a job. The plan should recognize unique strengths, abilities, and interests of the individual.

**Medicaid Waiver Case Manager (CM):** A person who helps develop your plan of Medicaid services if you have a Medicaid Waiver. This could include services such as residential supports, supports in your family home, and/or employment services.

**Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC):** An employee of VRS who provides guidance and counseling to individuals with a disability who are seeking employment. The VRC also determines if a person is eligible for VR services. If a person is eligible, the VRC helps develop the Individualized Plan for Employment.



VRS assisted Jacob Arland in learning to drive to help achieve his career goal of operating construction equipment.

*"The part I like best [about working with VRS] is that it puts me in a position to get an actual job."*

*Jacob Arland*

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## Key Questions and Answers

### What Can I Do While I Am Waiting?

- Make a list of your goals and/or talents. This way, you are ready to share your goals with your Case Manager or VR Counselor.
- Develop vocational skills through volunteer opportunities.
- Do practice interviews.
- Think about what you might wear to an interview or particular job. Spread out the expense of work clothes by shopping early or going to a thrift store for a good deal!
- Think about your transportation options. If it applies, practice riding the bus or other forms of public transportation.
- Organize your paperwork (see “What Should I Bring To Meet the VRS Counselor” for ideas).

### What Should I Bring to Meet the VR Counselor?

- Proof of SSDI, SSI, and/or Medicaid, if applicable.
- Documentation to verify your disability.
- (optional) Résumé or past work experiences.
- Most recent Individualized Education Program (IEP), if applicable.
- (optional) List of your goals and talents to help determine what kind of work you might like.

### What Should I Ask to Help Me Choose An Employment Provider?

- How long have you been offering employment services?
- How many people have you helped find jobs?
- Will you consider my interests and talents when helping me look for a job?
- What happens if I don’t get along with my Employment Specialist?

### Interviewing Tips

- Dress professionally. This could mean dress pants, a tie, a suit, a collared shirt, or something similar.
- Arrive 15 minutes before your interview.
- Have a copy of your résumé and application.
- If you are comfortable, shake the interviewer’s hand and look him or her in the eye.
- Be yourself! Let them know why they should hire you. Take your time to speak confidently.
- Write a “Thank you” note after the interview.

### Important Contact Information

My VR Counselor

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My Employment Provider

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My Employment Specialist

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My Medicaid Waiver Case Manager

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## Frequently Asked Questions

### *Is community employment really possible?*

Yes! Individuals with developmental disabilities are employed in the community. Employers are eager to hire hard-working and qualified people – and you are no different! If you are qualified, a job may be possible. Having a job increases independence, improves confidence, and helps you contribute to your community, among other benefits.

### *Who is eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS)?*

People with disabilities who are looking for employment may be eligible for services.

### *What if VRS says I am not eligible?*

Everyone has the right to appeal the decision. You also have the right to re-apply to VRS in the future if your situation changes. If you have a Medicaid Waiver, work with your case manager for other day-service options.

### *How Do I apply?*

You, your family member or Medicaid Waiver Case Manager can contact VRS at 800-545-7763. A VR counselor will be assigned to help you.

### *What services may be provided?*

Services may include: evaluation for eligibility, vocational counseling and guidance to set goals and a plan to find a job, job placement assistance, supported employment, job-skills training and more.

### *How do I learn more about Vocational Rehabilitation?*

There is a great short video entitled, “Working with Vocational Rehabilitation Services” that can be found at [www.vrs.in.gov](http://www.vrs.in.gov)

### *Will employment affect my government benefits?*

This is an important question to ask, and it may be different for each person. To make sure you are prepared for how your job could affect your government benefits, such as SSI, SSDI or Medicaid, contact your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, a Social Security Administration office, or visit [www.benefits.gov](http://www.benefits.gov) to learn more.

### *What happens if I lose my job?*

If you lose or leave your job, don't give up! You can start the process again by contacting VRS or your case manager. Contact VRS at 800-545-7763 or visit [www.vrs.in.gov](http://www.vrs.in.gov).

### *What do I do if I'm having trouble with VRS?*

The Client Assistance Program (CAP) is offered through Indiana Disability Rights. If you have questions or concerns, contact them at: 317-722-5555 or 800-622-4845.



317-977-2375 800-382-9100  
[www.arcind.org](http://www.arcind.org)

Vocational Rehabilitation Services  
800-545-7763 or [www.vrs.in.gov](http://www.vrs.in.gov)

Social Security Administration  
800-772-1213 or [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov)