

Chapter 2

INDIVIDUALIZED PLAN FOR EMPLOYMENT

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SECTION 1: DEFINITIONS

Comparable services and benefits means services and benefits that are provided or paid for by other Federal, State, or local public agencies, by health insurance, or by employee benefits; are available to the individual at the time needed to ensure the progress of the individual toward achieving the employment outcome in his/her IPE; and are commensurate with the services that the individual would otherwise receive from DBVI. (For purposes of this definition, comparable benefits do not include awards and scholarships based on merit.)

Competitive employment means work in the competitive labor market that is performed on a full-time or part-time basis in an integrated setting and for which an individual is compensated at or above the minimum wage, but not less than the customary wage and level of benefits paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by individuals who are not disabled.

Extended services means ongoing support services and other appropriate services needed to support and maintain an individual with a most significant disability in supported employment and that are provided by a State agency, a private nonprofit organization, employer, or any other appropriate resource, from funds other than those available from DBVI, after an individual with a most significant disability has made the transition from support provided by DBVI.

Integrated setting:

- i. With respect to the provision of services means a setting typically found in the community in which applicants or eligible individuals interact with non-disabled individuals other than non-disabled individuals who are providing services to those applicants or eligible individuals;
- ii. With respect to an employment outcome services means a setting typically found in the community in which applicants or eligible individuals interact with non-disabled individuals, other than non-disabled individuals who are providing services to those applicants or eligible individuals, to the same extent that non-disabled individuals in comparable positions interact with other persons.

Qualified vocational rehabilitation counselor means an individual with a Master's

degree in Rehabilitation Counseling; if the individual is a DBVI employee but does not hold a Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling, he/she may be considered to be qualified if in an approved plan within DBVI's Comprehensive System for Personnel Development.

Supported employment means competitive employment in an integrated setting, or employment in integrated work settings in which individuals are working toward competitive employment, consistent with the strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interest, and informed choice of the individuals with ongoing support services for individuals with the most significant disabilities;

- i. For whom competitive employment has not traditionally occurred or for whom competitive employment has been interrupted or intermittent as a result of a significant disability, and
- ii. Who, because of the nature and severity of their disabilities, need intensive supported employment services from DBVI and extended services after transition to extended services; or,

Transitional employment means a series of temporary job placements in competitive work in integrated settings with ongoing support services for individuals with the most significant disabilities due to mental illness. In transitional employment, the provision of ongoing support services must include continuing sequential job placements until job permanency is achieved.

SECTION 2: ASSESSMENT

An assessment for determining vocational rehabilitation needs, if appropriate, for each eligible individual shall be conducted, and an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) shall be developed and implemented as soon as possible following a determination of eligibility. The purpose of this assessment is to determine the employment outcome, and the nature and scope of services to be included in the IPE. The individual may collect assessment information and may also use family, friends, or others for technical assistance.

If additional data are necessary to prepare the IPE, the counselor will conduct a comprehensive assessment of the individual's unique needs and abilities, including the need for supported employment services, in the most integrated setting possible, consistent with the informed choice of the individual. The comprehensive

assessment must be limited to information necessary to identify the rehabilitation needs of the individual and develop the IPE and may include:

1. An analysis of pertinent medical, psychiatric, psychological, neuropsychological, and other pertinent vocational, educational, cultural, social, recreational, and environmental factors and related functional limitations that affect the employment and rehabilitation needs of the individual;
2. An analysis of the individual's personality, career interests, interpersonal skills, intelligence and related functional capacities, educational achievements, work experience, vocational aptitudes, personal and social adjustments, and employment opportunities;
3. An appraisal of the individual's patterns of work behavior and services needed to acquire occupational skills and to develop work attitudes, work habits, work tolerance, and social and behavior patterns suitable for successful job performance; and
4. An assessment, through the use of rehabilitation technology services, of the individual's capacity to perform in a work environment, including an integrated setting, to the maximum extent possible and consistent with the individual's informed choice.

SECTION 3: DEVELOPMENT OF THE IPE

A. Timeframe

The IPE shall be developed within 30 days of eligibility determination, unless:

1. A longer assessment period is needed to determine goals and objectives; or
2. The individual is undergoing a trial work experience (see Chapter 1, Eligibility); or
3. The individual is writing his/her own IPE and needs additional time.

B. DBVI's role

DBVI may help the individual get information needed to make informed choices. Examples of such information are: providers and their qualifications, cost, accessibility, consumer satisfaction information if available, and the degree of integration provided. Necessary support to individuals who may need and desire assistance in making informed choices may be provided. The intent is to have the individual learn how to research and analyze information for making decisions

about services and providers.

The following information shall be provided to each eligible individual in writing and in an appropriate mode of communication which is accessible to the individual:

1. Options for developing an IPE including that he/she may develop all or part of the IPE without assistance from DBVI (or any other entity), or with assistance from a qualified DBVI counselor, a qualified vocational rehabilitation counselor who is not employed by DBVI, or other resources outside of DBVI;
2. Additional information to assist the eligible individual in developing the IPE, including:
 - a. Information describing the full range of components that must be included in an IPE; and,
 - b. As appropriate to each individual—An explanation of DBVI guidelines and criteria for determining an eligible individual's financial commitment under an IPE; information on the availability of assistance in completing DBVI forms required as part of the IPE; and additional information that the individual requests or DBVI determines to be necessary to develop the IPE;
 - c. A description of the rights and remedies available to the individual; and
 - d. A description of the availability of and how to contact the Client Assistance Program.

The "IPE pre-print" and "Developing the Individualized Plan for Employment" forms include the required information described above; they are included in the last pages of this chapter. They shall be given to the individual at appropriate times for his/her plan development or implementation, as applicable.

C. Mandatory procedures

DBVI must ensure that:

1. The IPE is a written document prepared on the designated DBVI forms;
2. The IPE is developed and implemented in a manner that gives eligible individuals the opportunity to exercise informed choice in selecting:
 - a. The employment outcome, including the employment setting;
 - b. The specific vocational rehabilitation services needed to achieve the employment outcome, including the settings in which services will be

- provided;
- c. The entity or entities that will provide those services; and
 - d. The methods available for procuring them.
3. The IPE is:
 - a. Agreed to and signed by the eligible individual; and
 - b. Approved and signed by a qualified vocational rehabilitation counselor employed by DBVI.
 4. A copy of the IPE and a copy of any amendments are provided to the eligible individual in writing and an appropriate mode of communication accessible to the individual.
 5. The IPE is reviewed as often as necessary, but at least annually by a qualified vocational rehabilitation counselor and the eligible individual to assess progress in achieving the identified employment outcome. (The case record must indicate that an annual review of the IPE was conducted even if no amendments are made.)
 6. The IPE is amended, as necessary, by the individual in collaboration with a representative of DBVI or a qualified vocational rehabilitation counselor (to the extent determined to be appropriate by the individual), if there are substantive changes in the employment outcome, the services to be provided, or the service providers.
 7. Amendments do not take effect until agreed to and signed by the eligible individual and by a qualified vocational rehabilitation counselor employed by DBVI.
 8. An IPE for a student with a disability receiving special education services is developed:
 - a. In consideration of the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP); and
 - b. In accordance with the plans, policies, procedures, and terms established by any interagency agreement.
 9. DBVI shall authorize and purchase rehabilitation services only when the IPE has been developed and approved by the eligible individual and a qualified vocational rehabilitation counselor. (Exception: DBVI may purchase assessment services necessary to determine eligibility and develop the IPE.)

SECTION 4: CONTENT OF THE IPE

A. Mandatory components

Regardless of the approach selected by an eligible individual for purposes of developing the IPE, each IPE must include:

1. A description of the specific employment outcome chosen by the individual that is consistent with his/her unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, career interests, and informed choice; and, to the maximum extent appropriate, results in employment in an integrated setting;
2. A description of the specific rehabilitation services needed to achieve the employment outcome, including, as appropriate, the provision of assistive technology devices and services, and personal assistance services, including training in the management of those services; and provided in the most integrated setting appropriate for the services involved and is consistent with the informed choice of the individual;
3. Timelines for the achievement of the employment outcome and for the initiation of services;
4. A description of the entity or entities chosen by the individual that will provide the services and the methods used to procure them;
5. A description of the criteria used to evaluate progress toward achieving the employment outcome; and
6. The terms and conditions of the IPE, including, as appropriate, information describing the responsibilities of DBVI; the responsibilities the individual will assume in relation to achieving the employment outcome; if applicable, the extent of the individual's participation in paying for the cost of services; the responsibility of the individual with regard to applying for and securing comparable services and benefits; and the responsibilities of other entities as the result of arrangements made pursuant to comparable services or benefits requirements.

B. Supported employment requirements

An IPE for whom an employment outcome in a supported employment setting is appropriate must:

1. Specify the supported employment services to be provided by DBVI;
2. Specify the expected extended services needed, which may include existing supports at the work site;
3. Identify the source of extended services or, to the extent that it is not possible to identify the source of extended services at the time the IPE is developed, include a description of the basis for concluding that there is a reasonable

- expectation that those sources will become available;
4. Provide for periodic monitoring to ensure that the individual is making satisfactory progress toward meeting the weekly work requirement established in the IPE by the time of transition to extended services;
 5. Specify coordination of services detailed under an IPE with services provided under other individualized plans established under other Federal or State programs;
 6. To the extent that job skills training is provided, identify that the training will be provided on site; and
 7. Include placement in an integrated setting for the maximum number of hours possible based on the unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice of individuals with the most significant disabilities.

C. Post-employment services

The IPE for each individual must contain, as determined to be necessary, statements concerning:-

1. The expected need for post-employment services prior to closing the record of services of an individual who has achieved an employment outcome;
2. A description of the terms and conditions for the provision of any post-employment services; and
3. If appropriate, a statement of how post-employment services will be provided or arranged through other entities as the result of arrangements made pursuant to comparable services or benefits requirements.

D. Coordination of services for students with disabilities who are receiving special education services

The IPE for a student with a disability who is receiving special education services must be coordinated with the IEP for that individual in terms of the goals, objectives, and services identified in the IEP. Also, the IPE shall be developed within 30 days of certification of eligibility.

You are eligible for services from the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI). The next step is to develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). Your counselor is available to assist you in developing all or part of your IPE. You may also seek other technical assistance in developing all or part of your IPE; your counselor can suggest possible sources of such assistance. The IPE must be written on forms provided by DBVI, then signed by you and signed and approved by your counselor. You may exercise informed choice in the development of this plan by selecting your employment goal, services, service providers, and methods to procure services. DBVI may have specific guidelines and criteria associated with the costs of certain services; information on them will be provided by your counselor as they fit your situation.

The IPE must include:

- *Your employment goal and projected time to achieve your goal
- *Services necessary to obtain or retain employment
- *Date each service will begin
- *The provider of each service
- *Criteria for evaluating progress in achieving your goals
- *Any available comparable services and benefits
- *As appropriate, any special terms and conditions

The Client Assistance Program of Vermont Legal Aid may be helpful to you in such matters as settling differences with your Counselor, verifying agency policies, and assisting you in the appeals process. (CAP's toll free telephone number is 1-800-769-7459)

DIVISION FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED INDIVIDUALIZED PLAN FOR EMPLOYMENT

NAME:

DATE:

You have been found eligible for vocational rehabilitation services to work towards your employment goal(s). It has been determined that: (1) you have a visual impairment that results in a substantial impediment to employment; and (2) you can benefit in terms of an employment outcome from vocational rehabilitation services to prepare for, secure, retain or regain employment. Homemaking, if applicable, is considered an employment outcome.

This is your Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). You have been given the opportunity to exercise informed choice in the matters of the selection of your employment goal, services, service providers, and the method to procure the services. We will review this employment plan of services at least once per year. If your situation changes, we will discuss this with you, as your plan may need changing. Your plan is based on current rehabilitation funds. If at any time funds or services are not available, your plan may have to be changed. At some time your case will be closed. We hope that this will be when your employment goals have been reached. If it should happen that you are unwilling or unable to continue in a rehabilitation program, your case may be closed for that reason. In either case, we will not decide to close your case without involving you in that decision. It is important that you understand your rights and responsibilities.

CONTINUED PLAN DEVELOPMENT: Your counselor is available to assist you in continuing to develop all or part of your IPE. You may also seek such technical assistance elsewhere; your counselor can suggest possible sources of such assistance.

REVIEWS: If you are dissatisfied with any actions taken or not taken in

your case, you may request: 1. An administrative review, 2. Mediation with a neutral third party, and/or 3. A fair hearing by the Human Services Board. For any type of appeal you should write to the Director of the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Weeks Building, 103 South Main Street, Waterbury, VT 05671-2304. Telephone: 1- 888-405-5005 (voice/TDD).

OTHER HELP: Before resorting to a review, mediation or a hearing, we hope that you will try to resolve any issue directly with your counselor. Also, the Client Assistance Program (CAP) may be of help in such matters as settling differences with your counselor, verifying policies, understanding your rights, and arranging reviews, mediation and hearings. CAP may be contacted at 1-800-769-7459.

You have the responsibility to cooperate in carrying out this plan and to make reasonable efforts on your own behalf. This includes keeping appointments and attendance at scheduled activities, getting good grades or ratings in any educational or training activities, and applying for services and benefits that may be available from other places which may be helpful in successfully completing this plan. It is also your responsibility to fulfill any agreement that you make with your counselor and to keep him/her informed of any problems or difficulties and any changes in your situation. If you fail to carry out your responsibilities, we may have to close your case or change your program.

Your signature indicates that you understand your rights and responsibilities including information about CAP, have been given the opportunity to make informed choices, and participated in the development of this plan.

Participant's Signature

Date