Chapter 19:

Comparable Services and Benefits

Vermont Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired
Policy and Procedures Manual

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# Section I. Definitions

"Comparable services and benefits" means services and benefits, including auxiliary aids and services, that are:

* + 1. Provided or paid for, in whole or in part, by other federal, state, or local public agencies, by health insurance or by employee benefits;
		2. Available to the individual at the time needed to achieve the employment outcome in the individual’s Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) in accordance with the policy in Section II. B. below; and
		3. Commensurate with the services that the individual would otherwise receive from DBVI.

Comparable benefits do not include awards and scholarships based upon merit.

"Extreme medical risk” means a probability of substantially increasing functional impairment or death if medical services, including mental health services, are not provided expeditiously.

# Section II. General Policy

1. Prior to providing an accommodation, auxiliary aid or service or any rehabilitation services to an eligible individual or to members of the individual’s family, DBVI shall determine whether comparable services and benefits exist under any other program and whether those services and benefits are available to the individual unless an exemption exist under B. of this Section.
2. This provision does not apply when such determination would interrupt or delay:
3. The progress of the individual toward achieving the employment outcome identified in the Individualized Plan of Employment (IPE); or
4. An immediate job placement; or
5. The provision of vocational rehabilitation services to any individual who is determined to be at extreme medical risk based on medical evidence provided by an appropriate qualified professional.
6. If comparable services or benefits exist under any other program and are available to the individual at the time needed to ensure progress of the individual toward achieving the employment outcome in their IEP, DBVI shall use them to meet, in whole or in part, the cost of vocational rehabilitation services; and
7. If comparable services or benefits exist under any other program but are not available to the individual at the time needed to satisfy the rehabilitation objectives of their IPE, DBVI must provide the vocational rehabilitation services until those comparable services and benefits become available.
8. Exemptions

The following services are exempt from a determination of the availability of comparable services and benefits under A. of this Section:

1. Assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs;
2. Counseling, guidance, including information and support services to assist an individual in exercising informed choice, and;
3. Referral and other services to secure needed services from other agencies, including other components of the statewide workforce development system as appropriate;
4. Job related services, including job search and placement assistance, job retention services, follow up services and follow along services;
5. Rehabilitation technology, including telecommunications, sensory, and other technological aids and devices;
6. Post-employment services consisting of services listed under B. 1 through 5 of this section.

**Guidance – Exemption exceptions.**

*Although certain services may be exempt from determination of comparable services and benefits, a determination of possible comparable services and benefits may still be made if progress toward employment will not be jeopardized and if the individual agrees.*

*For example: If an individual, as a result of a work-related injury, needs a CCTV, the Workers’ Compensation insurance carrier may be requested to provide it. If determining whether the carrier will provide it will impede progress, DBVI may provide the CCTV. The Workers” Compensation carrier may subsequently be requested and expected to reimburse the funds expended.*

***End Guidance.***